States of Divergence

Sven Lütticken

In *States of Divergence*, Sven Lütticken invites readers into an exploration of history as accelerating catastrophe – and of alternative, oppositional, divergent practices in life, art and revolutionary thought. Set against the backdrop of global crises, from climate change to pandemics, Lütticken dissects contemporary cultural and political practices that attempt to break free from the disastrous momentum of capitalist modernity. His journey traverses fields including art theory, philosophy, and politics, presenting a nuanced critique of the ways in which deviant temporalities and forms of life confront or adapt to catastrophe.

Through a series of essays, the book tackles issues ranging from survival to prefigurative practice, indigeneity and internationalism, and the dialectics of critique and revolution. Lütticken masterfully blends personal narrative, historical inquiry, and theoretical reflection to question what it means to live – and resist – within the contradictions of our time. *States of Divergence* is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand how art, politics, and life intersect in an era defined by ever-deepening contradictions and conflicts.

Sven Lütticken is an art historian. He teaches at Leiden University's Academy of Creative and Performing Arts and at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He is the author of *History in Motion: Time in the Age of the Moving Image* (2013), *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice after Autonomy* (2017), and *Objections: Forms of Abstraction, Vol. 1* (2022).

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The first chapter is the final version of an essay written for the catalogue of the exhibition *Tell me about yesterday tomorrow* at the NS-Dokumentatonszentrum München (Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism), curated by Nicolaus Schafhausen. At the request of the editors, what was published was a shortened (i.e., censored and "germanized") version without certain offending passages. *Third Text Online* was kind enough to document the full version (on May 7, 2021), which has been fine-tuned for the present publication; many thanks to Richard Dyer and Nicola Gray.

"Potential Possibilities" contains elements from my essays "Running out of Time" in Futurity Report, edited by Eric de Bruyn and myself (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2020) and "Divergent States of Emergence: Remarks on Potential Possibilities, Against All Odds" in *e-flux journal* no. 115, February 2021.

Thanks to Andreas Petrossiants and Kaye Cain-Nielsen, *e-flux journal* proved a productive laboratory. Chapter 3 is largely based on the eponymous essay published in two instalments in the journal, in nos. 128 and 139 (September-October 2023). Some ideas had been tried out before in a review of Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything* for *Critique d'Art* (no. 59, Autumn/Winter 2022, pp. 151-159).

Chapter 4 is largely based on "Toward a Terrestrial" in *e-flux journal* no 103 (October 2019) and "Transnational Trajectories," published in August 2021 as part of a series titled *ExitStateCraft,* which Maria Hlavajova had invited me to edit, on BAK's online platform *Prospections*, with Wietske Maas as managing editor.

The postscript draws on a more extensive article written for the *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, commissioned by Tobias Dias and Maja Bak Herrie.

To different degrees, these publications are shot through with the symptoms of neoliberal self-exploitation and burnout, as well as the stress of living through the pandemic in the covertly Trumpian country that is The Netherlands. For this book, I have removed the glitches and developed some of the arguments more rigorously even while – hopefully – maintaining the sense of exposure, affectedness and *sensing* that informs it all. Thanks to Stevphen Shukaitis for supporting this, and for forcing me to stop rewriting.

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Introduction
Theory as Praxis in and against the Catastrophe

This book is concerned with forms of emergence and divergence. It addresses historical potentiality as a slippery yet far from imaginary material to be worked with, to be incorporated into practice. The focus is on those practices that seek to break, against all odds, with the structures and habits that have produced the contemporary condition of the capitalocene. In recent art theory, *contemporaneity* has been theorized as "the coexistence of distinct temporalities, of different ways of *being* in relation to time" – in opposition to the linear temporality of modernism.[1] *States of Divergence* is based on the contention that as *contemporaneity becomes catastrophic,* it is marked by a divergence of temporalities and by incompatible and antagonistic forms of life. I see this dynamic as an exercise in historical theory at a moment when the storm of history is intensifying – and when human history increasingly generates actual forms of extreme weather, thus literalizing Walter Benjamin's characterization of "progress" as a storm.[2]

States of Divergence engages with the relentless linearity of history-as-storm, or history-as-catastrophe, through a series of detours that seek to sound out possible forms of survival, of more than survival: forms of life. Written under pressure, in the storm,

this book asserted itself over other long-term projects. History is what happens while you're busy making other plans. All theory is relational, so I obviously build on and engage in a dialogue with others – while trying to abstain from the rituals of Mutually Assured Relevance that mark so much writing. My readings of older and contemporary theoretical articulations are situational, emerging out of encounters and assemblies, out of aesthetic and political experiences. In other words: This book is the work of a historical materialist who cannot be trusted; trusted not to stray and deviate, or trouble retro-Leninist certitudes and pat universalisms with pesky particularities.

In the Zone

In mid-March of 2020, I was visiting the Fukushima Exclusion Zone with members of the curatorial collective Don't Follow the Wind, which has created – and maintains – an exhibition in the Zone. We could not visit the TEPCO Decommissioning Archive

Center, which was closed and deserted due to COVID-19. With its outward appearance of a Disneyland-like montage of houses where prominent pioneers of modern (techno)science lived (Edison, Einstein, Curie), the Center historicizes TEPCO and nuclear energy. Originally built as an "Energy Museum" before being retooled as an archive post 3/11, the site inscribes the disaster managed by TEPCO into a lineage of progress though the rhetoric of nostalgia. This is indeed in keeping with the Disneyland formula: There's quaint old Main Street, ca. 1900, and there's Tomorrowland. In this case, Tomorrowland is all around us, and it has been transformed by what Disney called "Our Friend, the Atom" – the title of his 1957 TV special, which was accompanied by a lavishly illustrated coffee-table book, shown in the special, as well as a mass-market paperback.[3]

Japan was introduced to industrial technology during the Expedition of 1853-54, when Commodore Perry of the US Navy forced an "opening" of the country that would lead to the Meiji restoration. Arriving on state-of-the-art warships, Perry further impressed his somewhat involuntary hosts by demonstrating a telegraph set and a fully functioning miniature steam locomotive on a circular track. Although this one was running around in circles, Maurizio Lazzarato has used the train as a metaphor for the 19th-century, linear conception of history, in which technological

progress is an unstoppable teleological force.[4] The transition to coal and steam power was crucial, with coal making production much more predictable and plannable.[5] The telos of profit maximalization narrows down a variety of competing technics into a single, linear, and accelerating *technology* – expending ever more energy in the process. By 1973, when the first reactor of the Fukushima Daiichi plant was already in operation, Japan consumed 576 percent of its biocapacity (compared to 176 for the US and 292 for West Germany).[6]

The Perry episode was retold (largely through Japanese prints) in Charles and Ray Eames's 1970 short film *The Black Ships*. It should come as no surprise that Perry's demonstration fascinated the Eameses. They must have recognized what Perry was doing: turning technological progress into a spectacle. Such staged events performatively produce a sense of inexorable linear history. In a condensed and edited fashion, they allow history to be consumed at leisure – minus the conflicts, the slavery, and genocides. As frequent contributors to world's fairs and propaganda exhibitions for the Pax Americana, the Eameses were in many ways Walt Disney's more highbrow counterparts. At the 1964 New York World's Fair, for which Disney created the audio-animatronic Carousel of Progress for the general Electric pavilion (among other shows), Charles and Ray Eames took charge of the IBM pavilion.[7] TEPCO's Energy Museum can be situated in this design lineage. Even in its guise as Decommissioning Archive Center, it still seeks to instil a sense that while the train may have been momentarily derailed, the engineers of progress are busy fixing the mess and getting it back on track.

The Center's COVID-induced closure was a convergence of disasters. If staged events such as world's fairs – or the attractions of Disneyland or the Disneyfied information center – are simulations of linear progress, the disaster shatters any such notions. In contrast to touristic event culture, which alleviates the humdrum sameness of everyday life by presenting the viewers with a carousel of progress that makes them part of a grand project, the disastrous event

is a rift in that very project, that very narrative. The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 is often regarded as the first properly "modern" natural disaster, as it spawned philosophical challenges to the discourse of theodicy (the theological debate about God allowing disasters to happen in order to test mankind) and scientific attempts to explain earthquakes in purely natural terms. In our own catastrophic times, the notion of "natural disasters" meets its limits in cases such as that of the Fukushima Daiichi Meltdown of 2011 or the COVID crisis of 2020-22. The generalization of the catastrophe leads to time itself becoming catastrophic; the disaster is not an interruption, but persists and intensifies.

During the early days of the COVID crisis, borders suddenly closed even for those in possession of the "right" passports, who were used to flying around the world. Neoliberal globalization was always based on a dialectic of borders and movement, of flows and blockages.[8] Triggering the closure of the Schengen borders, COVID also affected those whom privilege has so far protected. If both Fukushima and Corona led to a reterritorialization, this took different forms. Under COVID-19, the home became a safe haven – though for some it also became a trap, as stay-at-home-orders presupposed harmonious households with plenty of pleasant living space and good wifi. In Fukushima, the nuclear nation state turned part of the region into a zone of exception in which human habitation was no longer possible, and the home could no longer offer any protection. As part of Don't Follow the Wind's ongoing exhibition, which uses abandoned homes and buildings as venues, Ahmet Ögut's hybrid of a samurai costume and a hazmat suit (*Once Upon a Time Breathing Apparatus for Breathable Air)* and Aiko Miyanaga's breath encased in glass (*Tome-ishi Boundary*) show the breath of life retreating into ever smaller protective pockets.

In the Zone, the fled or expelled inhabitants have left behind houses that are haunted only to them – not the wild boar who now run free and try to break in at every chance they get. The pens of an abandoned ostrich farm have become an ostrich graveyard, complete with calcified eggs. The owner's favorite (male)

ostrich has been given a tomb of sorts – a shipping container for his mummified remains. The town of Okuma is deserted, but it still exists as a distributed entity: Its scattered inhabitants are still legally its citizens, still voting in municipal elections; the town itself as a juridical entity has been deterritorialized. The spacetime of an actually existing catastrophe – of the catastrophe not as a past or future event but as an event *lived* in the unreality of our collapsing contemporaneity – is strangely warped. The economically marginal Fukushima region has been used by Tokyo as Japan's "inner colony," so it makes grim sense that the 3/11 disaster happened here.[9] The citizens of the region are experiencing what Indigenous and Black populations have long been familiar with: living after the End of the World, in history-as-catastrophe.

In a dialectical reversal of sorts, this bestows a form of epistemological privilege on the underprivileged: it is no longer the white Western academic who is the privileged subject, but precisely the subaltern whose experience give them a situated and embodied understanding of life under catastrophic conditions. As the artist Alexis Boyd put it: "We must turn to those whose lived and historical experiences have been and continue to be threatened by and shaped within the actualized and anticipated violence of collective annihilation. To those for whom catastrophe has never signalled either total rupture or smooth continuity but is, instead, defined by its repetitive, accumulative structure."[10] There is much to be said for this, provided that it does not result in a fetishization of certain experiences, or in identitarian claims based on some form of unique access to dispossession. Acknowledgement of differential affectedness by systemic violence (slow or otherwise) must be a point of departure for relations and coalitions. In Fred Moten's words, to which I will return in chapter 2: "I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?"[11]

This recognition has long been integral to radical practice. In the 1960s, for instance, the Situationist International attacked the nuclear-industrial complex and what they saw as the reduction of

life to survival: Nuclear bunkers were symptoms of a willingness to let life shrink to the level of bare life. This was perhaps the real disaster, above and beyond the nuclear event per se. More recently, the former Situationist René Riesel, writing with Jaime Semprun, built on this by arguing that "the ongoing, and already consummated, disaster […] is hidden behind the image of the hypothetical catastrophe." The challenge thus would be "to understand the extent to which the real disaster differs from the worst scenarios announced by catastrophism."[12] While others, admittedly, pay greater attention than Riesel and Semprun to the colonial dimension of the nuclear-industrial complex, and to racial necropolitics of catastrophism in general, their insistence on the *generalization of the catastrophe* has its own political sting. Whatever one's specific situation, the question is how to actually live with and in the disaster; how to *wing it through the apocalypse*, in the words of Brazilian artist Jota Mombaça.[13] How to secede from dominant narratives and from catastrophic forms of life, or forms of survival?

Immanent Desertions

Tactics on the left have changed over time. The de-facto Situationist leader Guy Debord read and published Clausewitz, detourned footage from *The Charge of the Light Brigade* to illustrate Situationist campaigns in his film *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1968), and spent much time on developing and marketing his Game of War.[14] That Debord's military fetish seems to have become more prominent in the 1970s, when he increasingly looked like a general without troops, is suggestive.[15] At the same time, in other milieus a mutation or inversion of the avant-garde's military imaginary occurred. A case in point is a 1977 text by Jean-Jacques Lebel, another May '68 veteran, who had largely withdrawn from the institutional art world. In an essay written for the catalogue of an early Centre Pompidou exhibition, Lebel reflected on the museum as a spearhead of "urban renewal" (or gentrification) that betrays the '68

promise of lived creativity in favor of dead art, as well as on the rise of Autonomia and the *Indiani Metropolitani* in Italy. In response to this constellation, he closes with a "scenario for a happening" titled "Strategy for Victory" that proposes:

> To abandon that which is confining, destructive or negatively repetitive.
> To open up to that which creates and increases autonomy.
> To put one's energies and desires into a social position for the production and exchange of subversive and non-suicidal intensities.
> To desert, but positively.[16]

The text is informed both by Deleuze and Guattari, to whom Lebel was close, and by the rise of post-Operaist autonomism.[17] Guattari himself was of course closely following developments in Italy, where the Operaist focus on workers' autonomy had given way to a more general emphasis on autonomist self-organization that was no longer tied to the fading promise of proletarian revolution.[18] Today, like Lebel in the 1970s, the Invisible Committee translates this into the more overtly (anti-)military register of desertion, emphasizing "the decision to desert, to desert the ranks, to organize, to undertake a secession, be it imperceptibly, but in any case, *now*."[19] In a certain autonomist tradition, focus on flight, exodus and desertion stands in a generative tension with the insistence on immanence. This conceptual constellation is counter-intuitive: Doesn't desertion necessitate a break, a breakthrough to an outside?

It has been Antonio Negri who has most consistently developed a critique of the party form and of professional revolutionaries into an insistence on proletarian or multitudinous movements as purely immanent forces – an ontology critiqued by Ernesto Laclau and others. Negri's autonomist rejection of Leninist or Social-Democratic organizational forms is transposed into a monistic philosophical ontology, which is in turn mapped onto

the history of philosophy: "By the time we arrive at Spinoza, in fact, the horizon of immanence and the horizon of the democratic political order coincide completely. The plane of immanence is the one on which the powers of singularity are realized and the one on which the truth of the new humanity is determined historically, technically, and politically."[20] In analogy to Alfred Sohn-Rethel's desublimation of the "thought abstractions" of Kantian philosophy as being rooted in the "real abstraction" of the value-form, I would say that immanence is first and foremost a matter of historical praxis rather than ontological principle.

For all the fireworks of the Negri-Laclau debate, the ontologization of political debates has come at a cost, as many in their wake eagerly get bogged down in orthodoxy-signaling and oneiric recreations of the Communist Party. In organizational terms, after all, the "immanence debate" manifests itself in skirmishes about horizontalist versus verticalist organization, about spontaneist and productive multitudes versus parties and comrades. Returning to a *locus classicus* of such debates, between Lenin and Luxemburg, Rodrigo Nunes stresses that, for all their differences, both agreed that "There was no contradiction between the immanent unfolding of the process and agents deciding to act; that immanent unfolding was nothing but the conjunction of existing tendencies plus the actions of agents, not a transcendent fate governing all things like automata."[21]

In line with Nunes's insistence on thinking and practicing the vertical and the horizontal dialectically, rather than as being mutually exclusive, immanence need to be rethought as a troubling concept, and in the context of *praxis* – of forms of practice that forever breach the borders of immanence. Such was the conception of immanent critique proposed by the Frankfurt School. Early on, Walter Benjamin immersed himself not only in Kant's critical project but in the romantic conception of literary criticism as an immanent endeavor springing from an engagement with the work, rather than from external and supposedly universal criteria. This he later developed into an unorthodox Marxian "strategic critique":

> In an immanent critique of immanent critique itself, Benjamin noted that 'Immanent critique, as one which improvises its criteria in the work, can lead to some individual happy results' but needs to be supplemented by a 'programme' or a digression into 'materialist critique, which situates books in their relationship to their time' […]. The critic must find the moments of externality within the work – those moments where it exceeds itself, where it abuts on experience – and to use them as a basis for discriminative judgement. Strategic critique moves between the work and its own externality, situating the work in the context of experience, and being in its turn situated by it.[22]

Adorno arrived at a similar understanding of immanent critique as necessarily involving a critique of immanence, or a refusal to "hypostasize" and close off any given field: Even while rejecting the positing of transcendental, external vantage points, any *Kulturkritik* worth its salt would have to go beyond the immanence of culture, to question its supposed autonomy.[23] More broadly speaking, such a dialectic of immanence characterizes the project of critical theory, which Max Horkheimer introduced on the pages of a 1937 issue of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, in the vicinity of Benjamin's essay on Eduard Fuchs. Horkheimer pitted said critical theory against traditional theory in the sciences, which subsumes "facts" under a general conceptual system, whereas critical theory challenges disciplinary divisions and limited conceptions of academic autonomy in order to discuss "the goals of human activity" and ask "what theory means in human life," which traditional theory is unwilling or unable to do.[24]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Italian autonomism gained some traction in the German student movement and New Left precisely because "Frankfurt-style" immanent critique was seen as being all too embedded and reformist – with Adorno and Horkheimer, being highly sceptical of the new forms of revolutionary *Aktionismus.* In the imaginary of modern political theory and practice, "critique"

figures as a dialectical counterpart of "revolution." In Marx's work, there is the *Communist Manifesto* on the one hand – a call to arms and a revolutionary program – and the *Critique of Political Economy*, a.k.a. *Capital*, on the other.[25] In the context of the Long May '68, the proliferation of various flavors of Marxist and non-Marxist critique manifested itself in the triumph of "print socialism," in bookstores and publishing projects, in *Raubdrucke* and journals. For Adorno and Horkheimer, critique tended to become a substitute of revolution, yet critical print culture fueled the revolutionary ferment. At times, it provided cover: a book purporting to be D.B. Rjazanov's *Zur Frage des Verhältnisses von Marx zu Blanqui* was in fact largely taken up by documents outlining the Red Army Faction's position.[26]

For many soixante-huitards, the dialectic of critique and revolution fed into what Rudi Dutschke memorably called the long march through the institutions. The project was predicated on the hope of what Rahel Raeggi – the current Frankfurt School grail bearer – terms transformative immanence: the hope of reform through critical practice within institutional frameworks.[27] In art, this project came to be known as institutional critique, whose origins can be discerned in late-1960s groups such as the Art Workers Coalition and its feminist offshoot Women Artists in Revolution, or Aksie BBK in The Netherlands.[28] While such collectives and coalitions are a crucial part of the history of institutional critique, the practice had already become identified with individual artistic positions even before the term became established in the mid-1980s.[29] In the wake of the contradictory event of May '68, institutional critique was marked by critical loyalty to the specific social field of art, even while aware of the bourgeois ideology of the autonomy of art. Basically, the artists found themselves in the position of Adornian *Kulturkritiker.*

In his reassessment of institutional critique, Gerald Raunig quotes Andrea Fraser to the effect that "we are trapped in our field," although he obscures the context of this striking phrase in her essay: "However, the fact that we are trapped in our field does not mean that we have no effect on, and are not affected by, what

takes place beyond its boundaries. Once again, [Hans] Haacke may have been the first to understand and represent the full extent of the interplay between what is inside and outside the field of art."[30] This directly contradicts Raunig's assertion that Fraser presents the institution as "perfectly closed" and art as having no possible effects outside its field. More fundamentally, Raunig has a point: There are indeed plenty of moments when institutional critique becomes all too wilfully self-limiting, when a form of sociological reductionism kicks in and the institutional dimension of the "field" of art is fetishized, and when the "revealing" of the antinomies and aporias of this field – and one's position(s) within it – becomes the all too narrow horizon of critical practice. Furthermore, Raunig's autonomism reintroduces a key element of Deleuzo-Guattaro-Negrian immanentism: the focus on an immanence that is not merely – or primarily – that of a "field" along sociological lines, but of forms of transversal social composition that indeed manifest themselves as so many desertions: "Flight and exodus are nothing negative, not a reaction to something else, but are linked and intertwined with constituent power, re-organizing, re-inventing, and instituting."[31] Immanent desertions, then, are also *desertions from immanence* – even from critical and transformative immanence in institutions à la Jaeggi.

Without wishing to sugarcoat the limitations and contradictions of autonomism, or to deny the relevance of the party form as part of an overall assemblage of imperfect organizational formations, one fundamental clarification seems to be in order: The point of immanent political practice, not unlike that of immanent critique in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, is precisely to work with and against the contradictions of labor and life so as to intensify them and *produce moments of externality*. The key task becomes, in Stefano Harney's words, "to create the conditions for collective flight."[32] To be sure, that this *is* the task is something that many will not agree with; after all, isn't the task to bring about Platform Socialism via the Communist Party and planetary computing as latter-day planning? This is not the place for

a critique of such versofied and memefied theory.[33] Suffice it to say that this book is grounded in the contention that catastrophic conditions intensify the drive to desert.

While you can't secede from radiation or from climate change altogether, some have more options than others. Those in a position of privilege are in the sense the real secessionists: not from extractivist and racist surveillance capitalism, but from some of its consequences. Other forms of flight are closer to those maroon communities theorized by Moten and Harney. If undercommoning universities or other institutions raises issues that are familiar from the annals of institutional critique, the recent reconceptualization of institutions as infrastructures that need to be repurposed can be seen as a sign of greater awareness of the dangers of entrapment and enclosure.[34] The potential of organizational forms and specific institutions needs to be reassessed time and again so as to foster – in T.J. Demos's pun – forms of emergence in the generalized state of emergency.[35] This dialectical leap from emergency to emergence I will articulate here in terms of *states of divergence*: divergent practices and forms of life in and against the catastrophe.[36]

Autocritique

For the longest time, the critic and the revolutionary formed a somewhat repetitive cast of characters. If May '68 inaugurated the golden age of theory, the pantheon of radical thinkers of the era, certainly in the European New Left, was hardly a tableau of diversity, or of willingness to let the experience of a specific form of subjectivity and practice inform the writing in an acknowledged and reflexive manner. There is a certain diction in the writings of the great New Left theorists and historians – historical theorists – that is the language of the notion as it develops dialectically, but this is a historical dialectic largely bereft of *Lebenspraxis*. To some extent, certain strands of operaist-autonomist theory provide the exception here, but it is telling that autonomist feminists frequently had to secede from the male-dominated organizations.

The publishing houses of the New Left were complemented by less orthodox outfits such as Merve in West-Germany and Semiotext[e] in the US, which enacted a transformation of philosophy into modes of theory that were bought and consumed like the latest album releases.[37] Semiotext[e] combined "French Theory" with avant-garde literature; with authors such as Kathy Acker and, later, Chris Kraus, Semiotext[e] became an incubator of practices that have been termed low theory and autotheory. McKenzie Wark has characterized low theory, for which Acker is one key reference, as an "attempt to think everyday life within practices created in and of and for everyday life, using or misusing high theory to other ends."[38] Wark's own Semiotext[e] book *Reverse Cowgirl*, meanwhile, has been adduced as an example of autotheory – a set of para-academic writing practices that shattered the façade of academic detachment, foregrounding the ways in which theory is directly informed by subjectivity and lived experience.[39] Beyond the Semiotext[e] set of entangled lives (Lotringer, Acker, Kraus, Wark), Lauren Fournier rightly stresses that the autofictional mode has been characteristic of many of the most relevant practices of feminist, queer and BIPOC writers and artists during the last decades.[40]

It is those who did not feel as though they had access to the dominant author function of high theory, to a detached and authoritative authorial I, who infused the I of *their* work with the complexity and contradictions of life. Limited or tenuous access to the academic author function can instil a desire to challenge the dominant academic tone, which can be something of a drone. The distinction between conventional academic prose and autotheoretical self-experimentation is, however, far from absolute. There is an experiential dimension – a mimetic basis – to any form of meaningful and productive theory, particularly any meaningful and productive form of historical theory. Arguably, much theoretical and historical writing, mine included, has long been *autotheoretical to a fault* in that it tended to universalize, or at least to normalize, a certain kind of white male subjectivity

– a subjectivity that was oh so critical without quite reaching the point where processes of disidentification and unlearning might begin in earnest.[41] While autotheory, at its worst, can descend into self-important drivel, leftist critique can become a depressing game of one-upmanship; the "critical" self as neoliberal war machine jockeying for position in Anglo-American academia.

Positionality is now an almost sacrosanct notion. The lessons of 1980s feminist standpoint theory and Haraway's account of situated knowledges have been absorbed, or so it seems. Of course, the importance of a standpoint had already been emphasized in the radical left. *Wo stehst du mit deiner Kunst, Kollege?* (*Where Do You Stand with Your Art, Colleague?*) is a 1973 painting by Jörg Immendorff in which a painter burst into another artist's studio; the latter has a list of "isms" on the wall. The studio-bound artist looks up in surprise as his colleague exhorts him to become a comrade, to join the revolution, pointing to a protest march on the street outside.[42] Today, in the wake of feminist, queer and post-/decolonial accounts of standpoint or position, it is no longer "simply" a matter of the bourgeois artists or intellectual allying themselves with the working class. But what, in fact, has happened? In many respects, "defining your position" is a neoliberal imperative: Your position is symbolic capital, allowing others to reference and/or attack you, and producing that surplus value known as relevance. This *discursive position* has been complemented and complexified by an *identitarian position* that can be seen as an essentializing reduction, and indeed perversion, of older standpoint theory. In the process, "positionality" is all too often defined as a category with fixed properties. Being X enables you to say some things in a certain way, but not others; being Y brings with it different affordances.

In his *Prison Notebooks,* Antonio Gramsci (who is very much part of the "military" strand of dialectical theorizing from "general" Engels to Guy Debord) opposed a "war of manoeuvre" to a "war of position." The former involved a frontal attack on the state, and was possible in Russia, for instance. In the West, however, where there was no immediate revolutionary perspective after the failed

revolutions of 1918-19, it was necessary to opt for a war of position, a form of ideological and organizational trench warfare aimed at establishing a form of counter-hegemony.[43] Today, in an era of perverted Gramscianism, we are entangled in *position wars* in which individualized war machines face off against each other. In this situation, it is crucial that we move from essentialist positions to situated practices in which the self can deviate from identity to form alliances and coalitions.

If the slogan was once that the personal is political, we might now say that the postpersonal is critical. Here, the prefix "post" is obviously not meant to indicate some abstract negation, a leap into transcendental outer space; rather, it indicates immanent work on the problem of the personal, of "personality." While it may not be necessary or desirable to "get rid of yourself" (as the title of Bernadette Corporation's film on the 2008 G8 riots in Genoa has it), our subjectivity is clearly material to work with, to rework: autotheory as autocritique. This reworking occurs in encounters and collaborations. As immanent critique abuts on experience, it is clear that autotheory is also always *allotheory*. It's in the relation, the situation, that something can begin to be sensed and thought. Those who have the privilege to seceded from (some of the manifestations of) the catastrophe also have the privilege to *not sense* it, which also means that they do not have to think it.

For Isabelle Stengers, it is imperative to move from the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" to "something makes me think."[44] Thought needs to be prodded; critical theory needs stumbling stones. Something makes me think because I bump into it, or can at least somehow sense it. I can sense that making sense of it requires me to rethink much, most of all myself. With a nod to Robert Smithson, I would characterize the texts in this book as *theory in the vicinity of art*. Whether it is works of visual art or (theoretical or literary) writings that inform and propel my thinking in any given section, the overall project is an aesthetic one that considers the writing and the reading of theory to constitute a form of embodied and situational practice in its own right. Lessons linger of

the "door-to-door" city walks organized by the feminist collective Read-in: A group wanders through the city ringing doorbells to ask the occupant whether they would agree to host a reading and discussion session. One such session, in which I participated, revolved around Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman."[45]

More commonly, my readings have taken place in the context of seminars – in generic seminar rooms but also in art spaces, or in chapels, or on lawns, engaging in conversational sense-making. The university seminar is certainly not a utopian space of egalitarian study, but at its best it can be a forum for transsubjective sense-making. Such experiences inform even those chapters, written during the pandemic, that were mostly the result of isolated reading and viewing exercises; here, the conversational and constellational element emerges on the page itself.

Surviving and Sensing

I come at theory from a background in art history, which has long been a minor discipline, discredited by its fetishistic investment in its precious objects and its ties to the art market. It was never the

domain of High Theory. Rather than master thinkers, lords of logos, its practitioners were bricoleurs scouring archives and sources; when pressed to rise to the lofty heights of the *Begriff*, some showed conceptual creativity that, at times, even impacted philosophy.[46] The Aby Warburg revival in recent years (evidenced for instance by the sustained interest in his *Mnemosyne* atlas project or his lecture on snake rituals among scholars, theorists and artists) suggests that the scholarly bricoleur can indeed become a generative theoretician, and that the genteel and bourgeois discipline of art history has the potential to function as low theory – or, in the case of Warburg's 1923 lecture on the Hopi serpent ritual in the Kreuzlingen sanatorium, as autotherapy as well as autotheory.[47]

Georges Didi-Huberman has written extensively on survival in the Warburgian sense: not that of the reduction of life to "mere survival" that haunted the Situationists, but in that of *Nachleben,* the anachronistic "afterlife" of visual motifs or *Pathosformeln* such as that of the dancing Maenad from Antiquity in the art of the Renaissance. Warburg's Nachleben was indebted to Tylor's ethnographic notion of survival, which can refer to types of artefacts but also rituals or beliefs. In fact, an extended understanding of *Nachleben* in the context of contemporary culture needs to acknowledge somatic and social survivals. Beyond a *Bildwissenschaft* that fetishizes pictures, we need a political aesthetics of survival. In such a project, "history from below" – historical practice that sides precisely with the experiences of the dispossessed – plays an important part.[48] Didi-Huberman quotes Arlette Farge, one scholar in this tradition, specifically Farge's memorable account of the experience of attempting to reconstitute such historical experiences through archival research:

> Something shivers there. The bodies hum and elaborate their fates. Men and women, beings of the flesh, are "affectively in the world." They struggle constantly against their own bodies and are in inevitable symbiosis with them, in

> order to banish not only cold, hunger, and fatigue but also injustice, hatred, and violence.[49]

Quoting this passage in his essay on "rendering sensible," Didi-Huberman invokes Walker Evans's photographs of poor sharecroppers in the American South. For Didi-Huberman, such images "render sensible" in that they "render accessible what our senses, like our intelligences, do not always know how to perceive as 'making sense': something that appears only as a flaw in the meaning, sign, or symptom."[50] While capitalism unites us in division, by pitting us against each other on the market, radical politics and aesthetics start when this uncommonality is recognized as a social relation that needs to be rearticulated and remade.[51] "We're all in this together" is a noxious liberal ideologeme, redolent of cushioned celebrities singing *Imagine* during lockdown, oblivious of their privilege; on the other hand, "We're all in this together *differentially*" articulates a starting point for progressive and leftist coalition-building and organizing. The fundamental gesture of fascist politics today, but even of some supposedly progressive identitarianisms, is precisely the denial of relationality; fascism seeks to erect walls between an ethnically and culturally purified Us and a Them whose incoherence is precisely a sign of its shape-shifting and threatening impurity: Black and brown hordes, LGBTQ+ groomers, liberals...

Didi-Huberman makes a strong case for the power of affect, for the capacity of images to "render sensible" the viewer in turn: "we ourselves, before these flaws or symptoms, suddenly become 'sensible' to something of the life of the peoples – to something of the history – that escaped us until then but that 'regards' us directly."[52] Something shivers here, indeed. To be sure, it is not a matter of fetishizing some presumably primary and unmediated experience. Rather, with Adorno, we might speak of a *denkende Erfahrung*, a kind of thinking that is experience-become-thought; in line with Édouard Glissant, who references the Lisbon Earthquake, we could also use the term *trembling thinking*.[53] The challenge is to

turn the shiver of differential affectedness into a relation rather than a divide – a relation that can be politicized when experience is reflected and acted upon. The real divergence is one between those who acknowledge the shiver, who allow themselves to become sensible and sensate, and those who do the utmost to address their implication in the capitalocenic catastrophe.

Here certain works by Walid Raad are of an eccentric exemplarity. I'm thinking of performances such as *Les Louvres and/or Kicking the Dead* (2017-) in particular. Wearing a baseball cap that supposedly serves as an antidote to his panic attacks, the artist staged the script as an intersubjective experiment, the enactment of a truth that is a performative gamble. In contrast to post-truth performances by today's demagogues, Raad's persona sowed doubt throughout. In its iteration as part of Raad's 2019 exhibition in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, *Les Louvres* started in that show's video space before leading through various other rooms. During the first part, Raad delivers a virtuoso PowerPoint lecture that introduced various motifs that continued to be interwoven

throughout the talk. One strand is a narrative about The Cooper Union, where Raad teaches, being forced to introduce tuition fees due to financial and real estate speculation involving a colorful cast of corporate characters, including MetLife, which lent Cooper Union $175 million for a new building, and Tishman Speyer, which owns New York's MetLife Building.

In the last room, Raad continued in front of a number of panels with different varieties of floral William Morris wallpaper, on which cut-out portraits and corporate logos had been pinned. Essentially, this wallpaper functioned as a dizzying kind of quasi-flow chart. The artist talked the audience through some of the connections, informing us that his mother worked as a "wallpaper tester," moving from Fritz Haber's invention of the gas deployed in Ypres during WWI to the "skyscraper index" that links the construction of the "world's tallest buildings" to financial crashes. Cooper Union owns the ground underneath the Chrysler building (finished just in time for the 1929 crash). Tishman Speyer – which *of course* has also done business with Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, whose face is also on the wallpaper – not only owns the MetLife building but also used to own the Chrysler building before selling it to Abu Dhabi. This means that Abu Dhabi now pays Cooper Union rent for the ground, or, as Raad puts it in the performance: "My salary comes from the United Arab Emirates. And I cannot tell how much I wish I had not known this."

Somewhere along the line, the artist mentioned that Louvre Abu Dhabi bought the Yves Saint-Laurent collection, which boasts a number of examples of vintage William Morris wallpaper. In the past, Sheikh Khalifa supposedly also bought the art collection of Erich Maria Remarque and Paulette Goddard (whose ex, Charlie Chaplin, was an obsession of the Sheikh's). However, during transit these paintings died, or became undead: Like vampires, they sat in crates/coffins that smelled of putrescence, and they always returned to these crates no matter how hard the Sheikh's art advisor, Hanan, tried to ditch them. It was only when

Hanan painted copies on the outside of the crates, repelling them like a mirror repels a vampire, that it was possible to lay them to something resembling rest – in Ypres, naturally. *Les Louvres and/or Kicking the Dead* ends in front of a wall which, behind a half-opened black curtain, shows the crates with the copies of the undead paintings on the outside.

As in *Walkthrough*, his earlier performance in the context of his project *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*, with its narrative focussed on Moti Shniberg and the Artist Pension Trust, Raad includes a lot of factual material. Versions of the previous script were published with disclaimers reading variously "This work is, in part, a work of fiction," and "This text is (here and there) a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental."[54] Clearly, some of the key elements in both pieces are anything but; at times they come close to being (or seeming like) a fairly classic form of institutional critique, with Raad revealing financial interests and networks of power. There are fairly obvious links between these works from the *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* series and Raad's activities in the context of the group Gulf Labor, which has protested against the working conditions of construction workers on Saadiyat Island, the site of both the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the on-again/off-again Guggenheim. Raad, however, insists on keeping the two separate: Art operates in a different register from activism.

For the veteran of institutional critique, Hans Haacke, there is a continuum between his participation in Gulf Labor and his art; differences between them are differences in degree within a single form of aesthetic practice. For Raad, they are differences in kind between different forms of practice. One can question this somewhat rigid binary and argue that the disclaimers undermine his performances. Particularly in conversations about his work, there is the sense that Raad ultimately glosses over the potentially productive contradictions in his practice by positing completely

distinct realms. However, his insistence on the aesthetic specificity of art also provides a cover for different forms of truth-telling. Staging and performing his exposure to economic and social tremors, the artist suggests that art's task is a matter of "checking" the initial subjective-indexical revelation – "checking" being the term Raad used in conversation.[55]

While the artist encouraged viewers to do their homework after the performance, to read up on his references, clearly such checking is not to be confused with mundane fact-checking. Rather, the intimation of catastrophe is "verified" by gathering facts and placing them in a constellation that also includes fantastical elements. The artist's sensing becomes an exercise in sense-making that uses operative fictions to chart the empire of the senseless.[56] There is an obvious proximity to conspiracy theory here, yet the exercise foregrounds everything that conspiracism represses: The shivering and the bricolage that follows, as series of messy and bewildering steps through which the affected subject tries to chart the Empire of the Senseless… If prototypical conspiracy theorists *need* something to be true, and project their paranoid desires onto a hapless world, Raad's persona desperately wishes it all were different, or at least that he did not know.

"Some artworks die," Raad says, quoting an apocryphal Sheikh – and this, he insists, is to be understood not metaphorically but literally. This trope of artworks dying, or becoming undead vampires, losing their shadows, reflects his ongoing exchange with Jalal Toufic.[57] In the process, Raad reimagines institutional critique as a gothic tale. During the collapse of Napoleon's Empire – which was also a massive art-looting operation, centered around the Musée Napoléon in the Louvre – the French-German aristocrat Adelbert von Chamisso wrote *Peter Schlemihl* (1814) about a man who sells his shadow. With Raad, as tradition withdraws in the face of a surpassing disaster, it is *artworks* that lose their faces and their shadows. It just so happens that the shadow is a classic instance of the Peircean index, a proto-photo. Now, in the age of lost shadows, it is no longer the photographic apparatus but the

human subject registering the historical tremors directly: During *Les Louvres and/or Kicking the Dead*, Raad uses himself as a kind of messianic seismograph or a living camera, indexing an unfolding historical cataclysm.

Raad makes use of the neoliberal iteration of the art world and its institutions in what amounts to a practice of entrism and functionalization rather than desertion. The two tactics can be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, as even artists with a grounding in the autonomist movement likewise instrumentalize the residual autonomy of the art field – and its relative hospitality to both individual and collective practices that make the differential catastrophe sensible, that side with the repetitive, accumulative structure of the capitalocenic violence. There is no doubt that the art world, as least in its more heavily financialized strata, is fully implicated in financial disaster capitalism, yet on its margins it can offer some *Denkraum* and *Handlungsraum* for urgently needed forms of sense-making and militant research. The same can be said for academic establishments. One way or another, on different levels of literalness, we're all being paid by the United Arab Emirates. This is the catastrophe that we do our best, for much of the day, not to sense. To practice theory is to write against numbness.

Endnotes

1 Terry Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). p. 3.

2 Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" (1940), trans. Dennis Redmond, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm

3 The TV version of *Our Friend the Atom* was broadcast on January 23, 1957, as part of the Disneyland anthology series. It was hosted by the scientist Heinz Haber. Two versions of Haber's accompanying book were published: the lavish *Our Friend the Atom* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1956), which Haber presents in the show, and the mass-market paperback *The Walt Disney Story of Our Friend the Atom* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1956). When I discussed *Our Friend the Atom* in my book *Objections: Forms of Abstraction, volume 1* (London: Sternberg Press, 2022) I was only aware of the latter publication.

4 Maurizio Lazzarato, lecture at "Future Caucus," Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, May 20, 2017.

5 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and US,* trans. David Fernbach (London/New York: Verso: 2017), p. 203.

The display of the steam train fits into a general nineteenth-century pattern, in which European imperialist practice and racial theory pitted the stream train against the "indolence" of Asian cultures waiting to be colonized: see Andreas Malm and the Zetkin Collective, *White Skin, Black Fuel: On the Dangers of Fossil Fascism* (London/New York: Verso, 2021), pp. 350–360.

6 Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, pp. 249–250.

7 In addition to making presentation films of their proposed project, the Eameses also documented the actual pavilion and its visitors (or visitor flows) in another short film, *IBM at the Fair* (1965).

8 While clinging on to its ideology of free movement for citizens and goods, since 9/11 and even more so since the "refugee crisis," the EU has intensified its regime of "deterritorialized borders" against immigrants from North Africa to its own inner cities; the border can now be anywhere, if you're on the wrong side of it. The EU was always a colonial project, all its bleating about noble values notwithstanding; as brilliantly reconstructed in Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson's *Eurafrica*, the project of European unification involved a postwar attempt to consolidate the colonial holdings of the various crumbling European powers. See Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold Story of European Integration* and Colonialism (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

9 See Nathan Hopson, "Systems of Irresponsibility and Japan's Internal Colony," in *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 11 (2013), no. 52, https://apjjf.org/2013/11/52/Nathan-Hopson/4053/article.html

10 Alexis Boyd, *Ecologies of Impossible Belonging: A Black Speculative Engagement with Ecological Catastrophe* (University of Amsterdam MA thesis, 2020), quoted in Paula Albuquerque, "The Asset of Burnout: Transmediality as Agential Strategy," in Jeroen Boomgaard, Katie Clarke, Nienke Scholts (eds.), *Hinterlands: How to Do Transdisciplinarity?* (Amsterdam: ARIAS, 2021), p. 71.

11 Fred Moten, in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe/New York/Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013), p. 10.

12 René Riesel and Jaime Semprun, *Catastrophism, Disaster Management and Sustainable Submission* (s.l.: Roofdruk Edities, 2014), pp. 19–20.

13 A remark made during a gathering in the context of Jeanne van Heeswijk's project *It's OK... commoning uncertainties,* Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, July 7, 2023 (quoted from memory).

14 A small edition of the Game of War was produced in 1977, in time for it to be featured in Debord's film *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978). Debord also envisaged a mass-market edition.

15 Debord was something of an *éminence grise* at the Champ Libre publishing house, which published French editions of Clausewitz – as part of what McKenzie Wark calls the "Debordian canon." Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration* (London/New York: Verso, 2013), p. 141.

16 Jean-Jacques Lebel, "Dés-ir / Dés-ordre," in *À pied, à cheval et en Spoutnik. Quelques écrits 1961-2009* (Paris: Beaux-arts de Paris, 2009), p. 62. English translation by SL. The 1977 text was originally published in the catalogue *Paris-New York*.

17 See Laura Cull, "Introduction," in Cull (ed.), *Deleuze and Performance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 11–15.

18 For a contemporaneous document of this involvement, see *Recherches* no. 30 (November 1977), "Les Untorelli," which contains contributions by Guattari and "Bifo" Berardi, among others.

19 The Invisible Committee, *Now*, trans. Robert Hurley (South Pasadena: Semiotext[e], 2017), p. 18.

20 Michael and Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 73. Ernesto Laclau rightly cites this as a key passage in his useful critique, "Can Immanence Explain Social Struggles?," in *Diacritics* 31 (2001), no. 4, p. 4.

21 Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Eperience* (London/New York: Routledge), p. 156.

22 Rodrigo Nunes, *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal: A Theory of Political Organisation* (London/New York: Verso, 2021), pp. 62–63.

23 Theodor W. Adorno, "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft" (1951), in *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I. Prismen, Ohne Leitbild* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), p. 29.

24 Marx Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory" in: *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 188–243 (quotations from pp. 213, 197). Horkheimer's essay originally appeared in German in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 6 (1937), no. 2, pp. 245–294.

25 In addition to *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867/1883), Marx of course composed other critiques, notably the manuscript *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843) and *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875).

26 D.B. Rjazanov, *Zur Frage des Verhältnisses von Marx zu Blanqui* is identified on the cover as a publication of Verlag Van Houden, but the imprint lists Verlag Rotte Sonne as the publisher.

27 Rahel Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen* (Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2014), pp. 302–304.

28 Complementing Julia Bryan-Wilsons study *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press), Primary Information has republished AWC and WAR documents; see https://primaryinformation.org/art-workers-coalition/ and https://primaryinformation.org/product/a-documentary-herstory-of-women-artists-in-revolution/

On the Dutch artist's union BBK and its radical offshoot Aksie-BBK, see Pieter Ligthart and Cas Smithuijsen, "Action Replay: 20 Years of Artists Protest," in Amsterdam 60/80: Twenty Years of Fine Arts (Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1982), pp. 50–62. In the *Art Workers Newsletter* 1 (1971), no. 2, BBK was lauded with the headline "Dutch artists' Union Sets Example or U.S."

29 An early use of the term institutional critique can be found in Mel Ramsden, "On Practice," in *The Fox*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1975), p. 69, but this was a somewhat isolated case. Far more consequential were to texts from the mid-1980s: Andrea Fraser's "In and Out of Place" (1985), republished in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press, 2005), pp.17-27, and Fredric Jameson, "Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism," in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business,* ed. Brian Wallis (New York/Cambridge MA: New Museum/MIT Press, 1986) pp. 38–50.

30 Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," in John C. Welchman (ed.), *Institutional Critique and After* (Zurich: JRP Ringer, 2006), p.132.

31 Gerald Raunig, "Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming," trans. Aileen Derieg, *transversal texts*, January 2006, https://transversal.at/transversal/0106/raunig/en

32 Comment by Harney in a public discussion, quoted by T.J. Demos, *Radical Futurisms: Ecologies of Collapse, Chronopolitics, and Justice-to-Come* (London: Sternberg Press, 2023), p. 208.

33 For an extensive immanent critique of socialist calculation/planning discourse, see Sven Lütticken, "Plan and Council: Geneaologies of Calculation, Organization, and Transvaluation," in *Grey Room* no. 91 (Spring 2023), pp. 92–127.

34 See for instance Not An Alternative, "Institutional Liberation," in e-flux journal no. 77 (November 2016), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/76215/institutional-liberation/

35 Demos, *Radical Futurisms*, pp. 89–123.

36 On the genealogy of *Lebensform*/life-form/form-of-life, see my essay "Habitual Art History," in *In the Maze of Media: Essays on the Pathways of Art after Minimalism*, ed. André Rottmann (Transcript, forthcoming 2024).

37 This is Diedrich Diederichsen on the German (Merve) experience; Diederichsen, "Intensity, Negation, Plain Language: Wilde Maler, Punk, and Theory in the German '80s," in *Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967*, ed. Dominic Molon. (Chicago/New Haven: Museum of Contemporary Art/Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 143–144; also Diederichsen, "Aus dem Zusammenhang reißen/in den Zusammenhang schmeißen," in *Texte zur Kunst* no. 8 (December 1992), pp. 104–115.

38 "Interview with McKenzie Wark," *Stir*, August 31, 2011, https://stirtoaction.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/interview-with-mckenzie-wark/

The notion of low theory features in a number of Wark's books, including *Philosophy for Spiders: On the Low Theory of Kathy Acker* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2021).

39 McKenzie Wark, *Reverse Cowgirl* (Pasadena: Semiotext[e], 2020); Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press, 2021), p. 8.

40 Fournier, *Autotheory,* pp. 1–69.

41 Fournier rightly stresses the need to "consider the ways in which the 'auto' figures in even the most seemingly 'objective' philosophical texts." Fournier, *Autotheory,* p. 42.

42 See also Helmut Draxler, "Where Do You Stand, Colleague?," in *Texte zur Kunst* no. 81 (March 2011), https://www.textezurkunst.de/en/81/wo-stehst-du-kollege/

43 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: international Publishers,

1971), pp. 329–339. See also Adam David Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy* (London/Ann Arbor: Pluto Pressm 2007), pp. 95–99.

44 Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism,* trans. Andrew Goffey (Lüneburg: Open Humanities Press/Meson Press, 2015), p. 131.

45 This project by Read-in was titled *Regimes of Memorizing*. Combining a reference to the "living books" in *Fahrenheit 451* with different transcriptions of Sojourner Truth's speech, the workshop focussed on orality and memorizing. *Regimes of Memorizing* took place over four days in January 2014 in the context of the project *Made in Commons* by Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, Kunci Yogyakarta and Casco, Utrecht. The Amsterdam walk/workshop was on Janaury 23.

46 Deleuze's and Negri's references to Alois Riegl's notion of the *Kunstwollen* would be a case in point.

47 See Anselm Franke and Erhard Schüttpelz's video essay *A Kind of World War* (2021), https://archiv.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2020/aby_warburg/a_kind_of_world_war_kuratorisches_statement.php

48 On the tradition of History from Below, see Anthony Iles and Tom Roberts: *All Knees and Elbows of Susceptibility and Refusal: Reading History from Below* (London etc.: Mute/The Strickland Distribution/Transmission Gallery, 2012).

49 Arlette Farge, quoted in Georges Didi-Huberman, "To Render Sensible," in Alain Badiou et al., *What Is a People?*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 77.

50 Didi-Huberman, "To Render Sensible," p. 85.

51 See Demos, *Radical Futurisms*, p. 24.

52 Didi-Huberman, "To Render Sensible," p. 85.

53 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 186; "The Earth is Trembling": Édouard Glissant in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist," *032c*, December 20, 2021, https://032c.com/magazine/edouard-glissant-and-hans-ulrich-obrist

54 The first disclaimer is from the script as published as a booklet in the cassette Walid Raad, *Walkthrough* (London: Black Dog, 2014); the second from the *e-flux journal* version published in no. 48 (October 2013) and no. 49 (November 2013).

55 Here I base myself on a conversation with Raad, and a group of my students, after one of his Stedelijk performances.

56 My terminology here in part evokes that of Forensic Architecture, but clearly Raad's procedure is defiantly solipsistic, and does not aspire to an

"investigative commons." See Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth* (London/New York: Verso, 2021).

57 See, in particular, (*Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (Barrytown NY: Station Hill Press, 1993) and *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (Forthcoming Books, 2009); the latter is dedicated to Raad.

An Aesthetics of Prolepsis

Cana Bilir-Meier's twenty-minute black-and-white film *This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past* (2019) is accompanied by a voiceover that includes the titular phrase as well as its mirror image, "This makes me want to remember the future," along with many other variants of "This makes me want to…" taken from the YouTube comments for Childish Gambino's song *Redbone*.[1] Bilir-Meier's short film shows young women in and around the Munich shopping mall where nine people were killed in a racist attack in 2016. There is a memorial right outside the center, opposite the Saturn electronics store, dark and grainy images of which can be gleaned in Bilir-Meier's film.

The women reenact gestures from photos showing scenes from the 1982 stage production *Düşler Ülkesi* – a play about migrant *Gastarbeiter* on which the artist's mother, Zühal Bilir-Meier, collaborated. Whilst shown as a digital video, *This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past* was originally shot on 8 mm film stock, giving it not so much an aura of timelessness as of "out-of-timeness." While the film does not dissolve chronology as such, it instills doubt about the direction of time's arrow. The past has a habit of being all too predictable – or does it? What if there are historical genealogies to be unearthed that disrupt conventional narratives and formatted forms of commemoration? And what if the future, in turn, can already be remembered, and indeed commemorated, as a future of inequity, oppression, murder, and massacres?

For the activist tribunal NSU-Komplex Auflösen (Dissolve the NSU Complex), Bilir-Meier produced the short film *Best court/ En iyi mahkeme/Bestes Gericht* (2017). NSU-Komplex Auflösen is a "people's tribunal" in the tradition of the Russell Tribunals, dedicated to the Neo-Nazi terrorist NSU group – responsible for a

racist killing spree that took ten lives from 2000 to 2006. With the NSU being symptomatic of the resurgence of fascism in post-unification Germany, the tribunal took issue with the way in which the German state apparatus tried to reduce the NSU to a tiny cell of three people, disavowing the role played by a support network and by the secret service. For a long time, the police had refused to consider the possibility that these were racist murders, as it fit a narrative about immigrant clans and gangs killing each other. In the video, Bilir-Meier watches scenes from the courtroom TV show *Richter Alexander Hold* in which an actress portrays stereotypical migrant women. If people's tribunals are pre-enactments of a future justice that is as yet unattainable in the legal system, TV shows such as Hold's prepare the ground for violence to come. The present is a continuous rehearsal of the future.

Bilir-Meier's films bring home the long duration of systemic and institutional racism and its survival in the minds and lives of those who have physically survived it. However, with the phrases "predicting the past" and "remembering the future," the artist introduces a chronological confusion that suggests the entanglement of retrospective and proleptic elements – and, as T.J. Demos has noted, radical chronopolitics is marked precisely by such a dialectic of retrospective and proleptic elements.[2] Here, I will

take Bilir-Meier's interventions in current German debates about historical memory as the point of departure for a discussion of a number of literary and cinematic practices from the 1960s and 1970s – practices by mostly male European writers and filmmakers, either German or with a strong presence in (West) Germany.

This might seem a somewhat conservative counter-canon of leftist avant-garde practice, something all too expected from an author such as me; yet I hope to show that the works in question can matter profoundly *now,* in our contested contemporaneity, if we are attentive to anachronic resonances and disturbances in the canon. Just as historical avant-garde practices and debates from the 1920s and 1930s echoed in the Cold-War Bundesrepublik, haunted by the disavowed memory of Nazism and the Holocaust, I am also interested in the ways in which such postwar artistic production and discourse can disturb the hegemonic *Erinnerungskultur* of the unified Germany – a suffocating environment in which "anti-antisemitism" has been weaponized as a form of white supremacy by a caste of pontificating Teutonic media intellectuals and politicos.

Permanent Pergamon

On 19 October 1965, Peter Weiss's play *Die Ermittlung* (*The Investigation*) premiered simultaneously in a number of West and East German venues. While Erwin Piscator's Freie Volksbühne in West Berlin staged a full production, across the Berlin Wall a reading of the script took place in the Volkskammer – the German Democratic Republic's parliament.[3] Based in Stockholm since 1939, Weiss participated in the cultural and intellectual spheres of both countries, although arguably his most important forum was provided by the West German Suhrkamp publishing house and the liberal and leftist media landscape in which it was such an important actor. For *Die Ermittlung,* Weiss condensed the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials into a spoken "oratorio" in eleven "cantos," in which witnesses present a chilling tableau of life

(or survival) in the extermination camp, including their own implication in the necropolitical system. If the play is documentary in nature, Witness 3 speaks for the author when, in the "Gesang von der Möglichkeit des Überlebens" (Chant of the Possibility of Survival), he elaborates on how the guards and inmates shared a cultural heritage and had fought for the same nation – being part of the same society until some found themselves turned into inmates rather than guards.

Die Ermittlung is a carefully composed reenactment of a trial that turns the theater into a Schillerian *moralische Anstalt* (moral institution), but with a Brechtian political twist. As Witness 3 emphasizes, the camp felt like a prolongation of the very society which had created its conditions, and that this can happen again, in even more "efficient" future institutions.[4] Going beyond a ritualistic "Never Again," Weiss takes aim at the structural antinomies and historical continuities of capitalism, from the Third Reich to the West German Bundesrepublik. This made the play perfect for ideological exploitation by the GDR – a state in which Weiss desperately wanted to see a compromised form of socialism that still held potential, rather than recognizing it for the sclerotic post-Stalinist regime that it was.[5] While *Die Ermittlung*'s reception got caught up in the Cold War, the play is not reducible to its GDR instrumentalization – as is shown by its equally problematic transformation into a pillar of official post-1990 German *Erinnerungskultur,* or memorial culture. As the artist Eran Schaerf notes, the verb *erinnern* suggests forms of subjective and self-affirming remembrance or recollection, as opposed to a more critical, thoughtful and situational *gedenken*, or commemoration.[6] Readings of *Die Ermittlung* in the local parliaments of Lower Saxony (2009) and Bremen (2013) inadvertently recall the Volkskammer reading of 1965.

During the Cold War, capitalism stabilized itself through neocolonial proxy wars in the "Third World." In 1967, Weiss participated in the Russell Tribunal on the Vietnam War in Stockholm. Whereas *Die Ermittlung* (for which Weiss actually considered the

title *Das Tribunal* at one point) has been a theatrical reenactment of the Auschwitz Trials, the Russell Tribunal took aim at American military action and alleged war crimes through the *pre*-enactment of a justice to come, of an "actual" trial with juridical agency.[7] As a trial-by-media, this was a form of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* or counter-publicness. In Harun Farocki's 1979 television portrait *Zur Ansicht: Peter Weiss*, the writer recalls his 1968 visit to Vietnam, and the effects of witnessing the Vietnamese struggle on his own concept of art and on the conception of his monumental three-part novel, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (*The Aesthetics of Resistance*). Weiss noted how culture was part of daily life in Vietnam during the war; even during bombings, there would be a poetry reading or a theater troupe staging some play. One may scoff at this as a romantic-productivist fantasy, as avant-garde wish fulfillment by a Western writer, but it is in keeping with a general problematization of an institutionalized "autonomous art," which had become ideologized as a unique selling point of the Free West in the context of the Cold War.

Around 1968–1970, many artists and theorists looked back at Brecht, Benjamin, Tretyakov and Heartfield to develop a neo-productivist notion of art as transformative avant-garde practice; art as engine of a cultural revolution in the context (and in the service) of a social and political revolution. Weiss, who was part of those milieus, was likewise infected with revolutionary fervor.[8] By the time the first volume of *The Aesthetics of Resistance* came out, in 1975, it was no longer tenable that the situation in the West was (proto-)revolutionary, or that guerilla tactics from the Global South could be transplanted to Europe. *The Aesthetics of Resistance* resonated in part because it was anything but sloganesque, and because it was a painstaking inquiry into the failure of the antifascist leftist vanguard of the 1930s. Partisan in nature, it sides first and foremost with memory itself, performing a properly

materialist *Gedächtnisarbeit* (memory work) that seeks to keep the dialectic in motion and the future open – all defeats, suicides and genocides notwithstanding.

The novel's narrator is a displacement or distortion of the author. The son of a Hungarian-Jewish factory owner, Weiss had opted for the life of an artist as a young man in the 1930s, becoming proletarianized without quite becoming a member of the working class. By contrast, Weiss' first-person narrator and his comrades are "proper" workers who try to educate themselves, who read voraciously and debate Berlin, on the 22nd of September in 1937, to study and debate the Pergamon Altar with its frieze depicting the battle of the gods against the giants – a writhing allegory of Pergamon's rulers' victories, of the "the victory of the aristocrats over an earthbound mix of nations."[9] The first pages are an *ekphrasis* that brings the mythical scenes into the present. The frieze's Hellenistic *Pathosformeln,* to use Aby Warburg's term, encapsulate a transhistorical event that is the very principle of history itself: What the frieze shows the workers, as opposed to what it shows bourgeois or fascist publics, is perpetual class struggle. This leftist reading of the frieze was also an intervention in the monumental work's reception history since its rediscovery and transport to the capital of the new German Empire, where it went on public view in the early 1880s, to be housed in the current Pergamon Museum by 1930. Having been moved to the Soviet Union at the end of World War II, the frieze was restituted to the Pergamon Museum, now situated in the GDR, in 1959. This is the site where it remains in the reunified country, despite calls for restitution to Turkey.[10]

Later blocks of Weiss's novel see an ongoing conversation about Greek mythology and ancient as well as modern art, about art's ideological instrumentalization, and about emancipatory study ("From the very outset, our studying was rebellion").[11] The content of *The Aesthetics of Resistance* is shaped by its context: the mid-1930s attempt to forge an anti-fascist Volksfront or Popular Front, which saw the Moscow-led Comintern enter into coalitions and alliances with social-democratic and bourgeois parties under the impact of Hitler's rise to power.[12] Throughout the text, this endeavor is shown to be fraught with difficulties that have deep historical roots. At one point, the fatal opposition between anarchists and communists in the Spanish Civil War is traced back to the Marx/Bakunin opposition and the split in the First International. Even if this project was politically doomed, however, it is intellectually productive for those workers who refuse to become doctrinaire ideologues:

> It was by fighting out conflicts, contradictions that we found what we had in common. There had been rejections, difficulties, and always the striving to pass through thesis

> and antithesis in order to achieve a condition that was valid for both of us. Just as divergences, disagreements gave rise to new ideas, so too did every action emerge from the clash of antagonisms.[13]

This is also an apt characterization of the discussions about art that run through *The Aesthetics,* with speakers taking different positions on modernism, for example. Was the autonomization of modern art a refusal to take political responsibility?[14] Did modern artists claim artistic independence so that they could remain in the service of the powers that be even while seemingly keeping their hands clean?[15] Such suspicions notwithstanding, the Nazis' attacks on modern art suggested that modern painting ("Max Ernst, Klee, Kandinsky, Schwitters, Dalí, Magritte") could be seen as a "dissolution of visual prejudices," an act of aesthetic sabotage with profound political implications.[16]

Concerning both art and other matters, Weiss's narrator distinguishes between a party line decreed from above and the reality on the ground, where the militants are far less consistent and prone to fits of doubt and generosity – even if, as the military situation in the Spanish Civil War gets more desperate and as Stalin's Moscow trials unfold, as former heroes of the Revolution and the Soviet avant-garde are sentenced and silenced, a climate of uncertainty and fear takes hold. Mayakovsky's suicide looms large. With the major capitalist democracies busy either appeasing Hitler or staying studiously neutral, the Party nonetheless appears to be the last bulwark against fascism. "We are expecting a world war, so no word that I utter can allow doubts about absolute agreement with our strategy."[17] There is no lack of forebodings, as in a passage about hearing the ominous sounds of the *Anschluss* on the radio: "That night we began to understand what vast temporal expanses the fight would cover."[18] Then, as the Popular Front in Spain collapses, there is a half-repressed awareness of the unimaginable: that the war is already lost (or that this episode of the ongoing war is already lost), as the beleaguered Soviet Union is about to withdraw its support.

These are proleptic moments that foreshadow events before their chronological occurrence. The narrator and other characters see the catastrophe coming because they know they are already in it.[19] Writing retro-proleptically about the 1930s during the 1970s, Weiss firmly anchored his practice in Walter Benjamin's "tradition of the oppressed" – but, like Benjamin, his focus was on the European industrial proletariat as represented by the Communist Party.[20] Much as one might critique this as a form of false universalism, the struggle of the industrial proletariat is nonetheless placed in a wider context – and, delving into the deep time of oppression, Weiss drastically undermines any sense of a linear history in which the triumph of the forces of light would be a foregone conclusion. As the narrator puts it right at the beginning, discussing the Pergamon Altar: "We looked back at a prehistoric past, and for an instant the prospect of the future likewise filled up with a massacre impenetrable to the thought of liberation."[21] Towards the end of the first volume, the narrator, about to leave Spain, visits the ruins of an ancient Temple of Diana. This return to Greek antiquity is a callback to the discussions about Pergamon at the outset: What could be a standard exercise in cultural tourism becomes a meditation on Ancient Greek colonialism in the Mediterranean, on history as a succession of wars and conquests and the rise of Rome, on the Greek gods surviving only as images on coins, on the ancient origins of capitalism and industrialism.[22]

Weiss's play *Marat/Sade* (1964) already had a deeply proleptic structure. Set in 1808, during the Napoleonic Empire, it shows the incarcerated Marquis de Sade and his fellow inmates at the Charenton Asylum staging a play about the 1793 assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, with Weiss's Sade gloating at his fictionalized Marat and his vain revolutionary hopes. While *Die Ermittlung* was a seemingly more straightforward documentary work of witness-bearing, here, too, Weiss inserted brief anticipatory statements into a trial taking place in the audience's present: Witness 3 speaks in the now of the 1960s about a potential future and more "efficient" future genocides.[23]

The narrator in *The Aesthetics of Resistance* is entangled in the mess of history and prone to illusions about the Party, but has a clear-eyed sense of the gravity of the situation, of the immanent logic and ultimate program of fascism. Throughout the book, art returns as an ambiguous agent. The two final blocks of Volume I, after the excursion to the Temple of Diana, focus on Picasso's *Guernica* (which the narrator and Ayschmann see as a reproduction in *Cahiers d'Art*), on Goya's *The Third of May 1808,* Delacroix's *Liberty on the Barricades* and Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa,* as well Robert Koehler's 1886 canvas *The Strike*. Can modern art – compromised and contradictory, autonomous and *fait social* – be part of the historical process of self-emancipation?[24] Can it help to put an end to the permanence of the Pergamon? Failing that, is its task to bear witness to doomed forms of resistance? These were the questions haunting the artistic production associated with the New Left, as artists and intellectuals reexcavated the avant-garde practices of the interwar period.

History Lessons

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet frequently worked in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s, and they engaged with the German-speaking avant-garde of the early twentieth century in a number of film projects. Their short *Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielscene* (*Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene*, 1972) takes its cues both from Schoenberg's "autonomous" composition for a hypothetical movie scene, and from the composer's irate letters to Wassily Kandinsky. Schoenberg's 1929/30 "movie score" evokes "*drohende Gefahr, Angst, Katastrophe*" in the tradition of *Programmusik*. Straub-Huillet suggest this mood reflects the Schoenberg's awareness of the rising fascist threat. The extracts from two 1923 letters constitute a chilling document of his visceral experience with antisemitism, and his sense of where this was leading Germany and Europe. The letters eviscerate Kandinsky; while the

Russian painter had invited him to join the Bauhaus, Schoenberg could not turn a blind eye to Kandinsky's antisemitic outbursts, which the composer regarded as legitimizing and announcing pogroms. These passages are read out by the filmmaker and writer Günter Peter Straschek as a harangue in the halting diction that marks many films by the duo – reflecting their engagement with Brecht's notion of acting understood not as emoting, but as citing or quoting.

Straschek's own 1970 short *Zum Begriff des "Kritischen Kommunismus" bei Antonio Labriola (1843–1904)* was produced with financial and material support from Jean-Marie Straub and from Alexander Kluge's Institut für Filmgestaltung in Ulm. Straschek would go on to direct the five-part TV documentary *Filmemigration aus Nazideutschland* (*Film Emigration from Nazi Germany* 1975) on the exodus of filmmakers during the Nazi era. As with Weiss's *Ermittlung,* witnesses speak in a present they were never meant to experience; a present thankfully not coinciding with the future that was scripted at the Wannsee Conference, yet hardly devoid of troubling continuities. In contrast to the idealizing official narrative about the postwar European unification, the European Union started out as an attempt to consolidate the various countries' colonial holdings.[25] The 1961 massacre of protesting Algerians by the Paris police, led by Vichy collaborator Maurice Papon, made the neocolonial logic apparent. And, of course, the Western European nations supported any number of American imperialist wars by looking the other way. Having perfected the art of whataboutism, the GDR exploited such continuities by branding its wall of infamy an *antifaschistischer Schutzwall* (antifascist bulwark). In the West, a similar sense of continuity – to the point of identity between the prewar and the postwar – fueled the RAF.

Straschek was a student at the Berlin film academy in 1966/67, together with Harun Farocki, Hartmut Bitomski and Holger Meins; the latter later joined the RAF and died in Wittlich prison in 1974. In the milieus in which Straschek moved, it was not always clear whether the urgent critique of the capitalist basis of

fascism and of its afterlife (both at home and in the Third World) did not lead to a collapse of distinctions.[26] Straschek, however, went beyond sweeping statements and sought encounters with witnesses, immersing himself in historical experience. In the 2018 exhibition *Here and Now: Günter Peter Straschek* at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, the *Filmemigration* series and other films by Straschek were screened at the thin end of wedge-shaped rooms designed by artist Eran Schaerf.[27] The scenography was precise and precarious, like unfinished constructivist stage sets foregrounding their temporary nature even while suggesting layers of archaeological time; displays with documents were inserted into some of the walls. Schaerf's design thus constituted an ephemeral memorial for Straschek's memory-work, which itself had almost been lost to history.

Among the films was Straub-Huillet's *Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenberg's Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielscene,* and Straschek's vocal channeling of Schoenberg was as strong a presence in the exhibition as the voices of the elderly witnesses in *Filmemigration.* As clear-eyed as Schoenberg's analysis of antisemitic *Ressentiment* was, in their

comments in the *Einleitung* film Danièle Huillet and Peter Nestler pit the composer's bourgeois refusal to address the capitalist roots of fascism against Brecht's communist analysis. Schoenberg *saw it coming,* but in contrast to Brecht he did not arrive at a practical, actionable understanding of the underlying political and economic logic. It could be argued that Schoenberg had a clearer sense of the deep time of antisemitism, while Brecht was all too eager to use "capitalism" as the monocausal magic word that explains everything. Nonetheless, a Brechtian Brechtian approach would potentially be more capable of accounting for the modern biopolitical or necropolitical operationalization of antisemitism in the framework of "scientific" race theory. In any case, for Straub-Huillet – who end their short by accompanying Schoenberg's *Lichtspielszene* music with images of atrocities from the massacring of the Paris Commune via Nazi gas chambers to Vietnam – Brecht's left-wing critique in no way negated the composer's achievement, instead serving to bring out the productive problematics of his work.

The duo's 1974 film version of Schoenberg's unfinished opera *Moses und Aaron,* shot in a Roman arena in Italy, presents the people of Israel as a small chorus, often compactly grouped rather than arranged in a "cinematic" manner. This Moses is the quintessential rarified intellectual or artist, a Schoenberg in biblical drag. He thinks and sees higher truths, but he cannot talk to the people, for which he needs Aaron – and, as the episode of the Golden Calf shows, it can be dangerous to have to rely on translators, on mediators. Gilles Deleuze sought to encapsulate the political dimension of Straub-Huillet with the phrase "the people are missing," arguing that "Third world and minorities gave rise to authors who would be in a position, in relation to their nation and their personal situation in that nation to say: the people are what is missing. Kafka and Klee had been the first to state this explicitly."[28] While the reference to Klee – more than the invocation of Kafka – may seem surprising, Deleuze refers to a striking comment in a 1924 lecture by Klee: *"Uns trägt kein Volk,"* there is no people to carry us. Although Klee added that at the Bauhaus, they were "looking for a people."[29]

"The people" are even more strikingly absent from more explicitly political Straub-Huillet films, among them *Geschichtsunterricht* (*History Lessons,* 1972), based on the unfinished Brecht novel *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar.* If Weiss goes against Marxist orthodoxy by stressing the "deep time" of oppression over the historical specificity of capitalism as a distinct system, Brecht's dressing-up of modern capitalism and imperialism in Roman garb can be read as a *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect) even as it suggests a historical pattern of repetition. *Geschichtsunterricht* adds another anachronic layer by showing a young man driving a car through 1970s Rome in order to interview Ancient Romans played by actors in antique dress, delivering Brecht's monologues about the rise of Julius Caesar, who is seen as having come to power in alliance with "the City" of Rome, its business elite.[30] While a peasant who participated as a soldier in Caesar's campaigns is also interviewed, and while the car drives through a cross-section of Roman quarters, the dominant monologues represent the speech of the victors, of the masters – as written by an exiled communist playwright in the late 1930s. There is little conventional acting in Straub-Huillet

films; often, speech consists of *cited* words, with Straub and Huillet paying intense attention to rhythm. Harun Farocki's film *Jean-Marie Straub und Danielle Huillet bei der Arbeit* (1983) shows Straub, in particular, obsessing about the actors' delivery of Kafka's lines, with a focus on cadence: "Now we must destroy all the pauses;" "I want to sense a colon there, even though Kafka has a comma;" "Three words with caesuras. No breaks, but caesuras."

While their written sources are usually from the twentieth century, these may refer back to Ancient Rome or the biblical Middle East. The citational speech acts often take place in or against layered landscapes – sediments of centuries of (agri) cultural toil. As Deleuze noted, Straub-Huillet's films are marked by a stratigraphic, archaeological, telluric image.[31] Far from mere backdrops, such layered landscapes form the setting of films such as *Dalla nube alla resistenza* (*From the Clouds to the Resistance,* 1979), which starts with a montage of mythological dialogues from Cesare Pavese's *Dialoghi con Leucò,* revolving around the relations between humans and gods, and between human masters – those divine models of divine sovereignty – and their underlings. The second half, based on Pavese's novel *La luna e i falò*, shows a man returning to the village where he grew up after WWII, listening to stories about anti-fascist resistance fighters hiding in the countryside while being confronted precisely with fascism's afterlife. As with Weiss, there is a sense here of long duration, a deep time of oppression that is not limited to capitalism, but which can both be illuminated by modern experience and illuminate it in turn.

Similar landscapes can be seen in the more modest *Fortini/Cani* (1976), where they accompany the Italian communist writer Franco Fortini's reading from his own 1967 book about the Six Day War, a soaring indictment of McCarthyite attacks on those who refused to join in the obligatory support for Israel. In contrast to America's neo-colonial war in Vietnam, the settler-colonial nation state in Palestine represented a form of unassailable, "good" imperialism that one critiqued at one's peril. His family background showing some similarity to Weiss's, Fortini

reminisces in his text about his bourgeois-democratic Jewish father, a Francophile liberal who was blindsided by the introduction of antisemitic policies under Mussolini. The distance from his father and the Judaic religion, to which his father at least paid the tribute of outward adherence, contributes to the understated pathos of *Fortini/Cani* – as does the fact that the writer is reading from his 1967 text at the end of the "red decade," when it had become highly doubtful that the industrial proletariat would live up to its foreordained role of Revolutionary Subject.

"Uns trägt kein Volk" – this equally chilling and liberating diagnosis reflects the autonomous modern artist's isolation and possible descent into a minoritarian bohemianism from which the Party (which has History on its side) may offer temporary and dubious respite at best. To be sure, even in its negative mode, Klee's dictum still evokes the nineteenth-century reactionary, essentializing discourse on *das Volk,* as emblazoned in the Reichstag motto: "*Dem deutschen Volke*," which Hans Haacke, for his installation in the German Bundestag, replaced with the more inclusive "*Der Bevölkerung*" ("population," rather than unified "people"). To little avail: The toxic discourse on *Volk* that was unleashed in 1989–1990 has propelled a rise of identitarian and neofascist movements. Constantly updated new normals legitimize daily violence. In this situation, Klee's dictum might be blended with a famous 1989 slogan to assert *Wir sind kein Volk:* We are not "a people," but rather a population intent on unlearning the myths of national identity that have long been misused in history lessons.

Space Nazis at the New Bauhaus

Between January 1969 and April 1970, Alexander Kluge made a number of science fiction films, largely shooting them at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) in Ulm.[32] Of the same generation as Straub and Huillet, and much younger than Weiss, Kluge had experienced the collapse of Nazi Germany in his early teens. In postwar West Germany he became part of several artistic and

intellectual networks with links to the pre-Nazi era and which had been profoundly marked by the fascist terror. During the 1950s, he served as legal counsel for the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) in Frankfurt. In some of his later stories, he recalls Adorno's and especially Horkheimer's fear of the West German version of McCarthyism, and their attempts to hide the Marxist roots of Critical Theory. As one of the leading figures of the Neuer Deutscher Film, Kluge became one of the founders of the Institut für Filmgestaltung (Institute for Film Design) at the HfG in Ulm – the so-called "New Bauhaus" founded by survivors from the milieu of the Weisse Rose resistance group, who sought to reconnect with Weimar-era modernity.

The historical Bauhaus amounted to a capitalist version of productivism, with painters such as Kandinsky and Klee teaching not new generations of painters but the future designers of the modern world. With Max Bill guaranteeing a genealogical link to this prewar Bauhaus, the HfG became a temple of precisely the kind of technocratic instrumental reason that Adorno and Horkheimer criticized: Modern design and production methods were regarded as intrinsically good, democratic, and progressive.[33] The Institut für Filmgestaltung, however, had a certain degree of autonomy. Kluge and Edgar Reitz insisted that film could not be organized along the same formal principles of design. In 1967, the Institute became an independent foundation (*eingetragener Verein*), which allowed it to function after the state of Baden-Württemberg closed the HfG in December of 1968.[34] For a certain period, the building on the Kuhberg subsequently became a commune run by (former) students, and Kluge's institute still used the workshops and facilities.[35] Production on his sci-fi films started in January 1969, in the ex-HfG.

This was the period that saw the first moon landing (20 July 1969), as well as a thriving production of sci-fi in various media. In Germany, where the *Perry Rhodan* series of pulp novels was virtually synonymous with science fiction, the genre had a profoundly reactionary reputation in the New Left.[36] A 1970 episode

of the left-wing TV program *Monitor* attacked the titular character of *Perry Rhodan* as a thinly disguised Hitler – a space imperialist set on conquering the galaxy. Kluge did not countenance such blunt exercises in ideology critique, delivered with dour-faced self-righteousness.[37] While acknowledging the reactionary tropes in pulp fiction, Kluge insisted on the need to engage with them and reimagine them. Hence, in the feature-length films *Der große Verhau* (*The Big Mess*) and *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte* (*Willi Tobler and the Demise of the 6th Fleet*), as well as in a number of short films and in the related book *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (*Learning Processes with a Deadly Outcome*), he incorporated images from *Perry Rhodan* as well from the *Landserhefte* – hugely popular far-right dime novels that glorified the "heroic sacrifices" of German soldiers in World War II.[38]

Kluge presents the future as a continuation, an exacerbation. Rather than inserting proleptic moments, he turns prolepsis into the structuring principle. If Ursula Le Guin famously argued that science fiction is not about extrapolating from the present in order to predict the future, but about imagining alternative worlds, the basic plot outlined by Kluge at various points in the novel and films is practically a parody of extrapolation. After Earth has been blown up in the "Schwarzer Krieg" (the Black War, 2011–2015), the military-industrial complex continues doing what it does best in outer space. "The Suez Canal Company survived the Black War only as an idea, since neither documents nor people found refuge in space; in 1956, it had already been dispossessed of its original

capital object, the Suez Canal."[39] This colonial corporation has thus made a transition to a galactic financial capitalism with the loss of its original investment; the process of accumulation hops from host to host, from the Isthmus of Suez to the metallic planet Dubna via Russia, as the value-form colonizes countries and then alien planets. Evoking the Institut für Filmgestaltung's emancipation from its institutional host, the company became a Platonic entity. As a juridico-financial idea, it could go on to extract materials and value from different worlds.

As *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* elaborates, a number of Nazi Generals – veterans of Stalingrad with medically prolonged lives – were instrumental in taking the war off-planet. Since they'd already lost the *Heimat*, losing planet Earth in the Black War was no big deal.[40] This narrative is in fact a sequel of sorts to Kluge's documentary "novel" about Stalingrad, *Schlachtbeschreibung* (*Description of a Battle*).[41] Kluge's insistent return to the fate of the Germans in the *Kessel* of Stalingrad throughout his oeuvre is somewhat uncomfortable, though he insists that this dogged insistence on "the realities that produced Stalingrad" is to be read as a protest against the consensus of postwar and post-unification Germany.[42] In any case, in the context of Kluge's space opera, the role of the *Ostfront* veterans enables a compelling engagement with history as continuity – the continuity of the master–slave dialectic, of exploitation and extermination. The use of images from ideologically dodgy schlock suggests the stifling presence of the past, a continuum across the break of 1945.

In the 1972 theory volume *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (*Public Sphere and Experience*), Kluge and Oskar Negt counter Habermas's idealization of the bourgeois public sphere with an investigation into proletarian forms of publicness, defined in terms of the "autonomous, collective organization of the experience specific to workers."[43] Negt and Kluge put Marx back into the Frankfurt School even while going against the orthodox Marxist focus on abstract labor-power by foregrounding the libidinal dimensions of labor and the role of fantasy. Under capitalism, "fantasy" becomes

a form of false consciousness, as in the *Perry Rhodan* dime novels, but fundamentally fantasy is a "specific means of production" that can never be fully appropriated by capitalism; it pushes to change relations among people and between humans and nature, and to reappropriate history.[44]

In their 1981 follow-up volume, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (*History and Obstinacy*), Kluge and Negt analyze the human being as a self-regulating *Mangelmutant* – a defective mutant, or mutant of lack, incapable of autonomous being and hence requiring constant social exchange.[45] Like Weiss, they engage with the historical *longue durée* in a manner that goes against the orthodox Marxist focus on modern capitalism as a specific system of production and exploitation. What ultimately gets reduced to abstract and alienated labor-power (*Arbeitskraft*) is capital's always incomplete capture of a volatile aggregate of different labor-capacities or labor-potentials (*Arbeitsvermögen*).[46] Such labor-capacities keep emerging and transforming under the impact of social and technological change. In the sci-fi register of Kluge's *Lernprozesse,* one motif is the emergence of such new labor-capacities through posthuman mutation: To be able to work on the metal planet Dubna, where gravity is much higher than on earth, women have developed "reinforced lower legs," and their heads and necks are pressed into their shoulder. Customs inspectors have protruding eyes that see everything. Meanwhile, since it is forbidden to hunt for slaves and to traffic in humans, and since no alien life has been found, mutinying units of the fleet are declared "non-human lifeforms," so they can be enslaved – in a galactic repetition of a historical process on earth.[47] The *Mangelmutant* keeps branching off and spawning new mutations, from bio-enhanced space Nazis to forced laborers with massive hips. This is the Hegelian master–slave dialectic as cosmic comedy.[48]

In keeping with what Thomas Elsaesser has called the "patchwork *Gesamtkunstwerk*" of Kluge's overall practice, as well as with the Ulm film institute's interest in hybridity, Kluge's space films are jumpy montages of disparate materials.[49] Both the space films

and the *Lernprozesse* novel contain appropriated appropriated images, which suggests that readers and viewers might be regarded as authors in their own right, as activated and productive spectators who may go on to appropriate the Klugean work in unpredictable ways.[50] Nonetheless, Elsaesser has critiqued Kluge's conception of authorship as being ultimately monological, and as marked by a compulsive repetition of similar plots performed by readymade, schematic characters who are barely more than names.[51] Bad outcomes seem preordained; learning curves end fatally. In Kluge's extrapolatory work, the future has already always happened, which robs it of its properly futural dimension. In keeping with this, *Lernprozesse* is written in the past tense – this is a future that has always already happened.

The intertitles of the films tend to be in the present tense, suggesting that we are eye witnesses. Through these handmade intertitles as well as their cheap and charming special effects (spaceships, alien planets) produced in the HfG's workshops, but especially through semi-scripted scenes featuring a menagerie of bohemian actors, the films exude a sense of genuine improvisation and collaboration.[52] The traces of the "rather lively" environment of the "autonomous" ex-HfG are all over the films.[53] *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte* is far superior to *Der große Verhau*, thanks to a stronger narrative and Alfred Edel's magnificent, half-bewildered performance as the titular cybernetician caught up in the galactic war. The film is marked throughout by a strong sense of joyful improv; Edel and Hark Bohm give the scenes with the leaders of the Sixth Fleet strategizing against the *Geschichtstöterflotte* (history-killer fleet) a sense of intoxicated chaos while clinging on to clipped snippets of Prussian phraseology.

In *Der grosse Verhau*, footage of a performance by the band Amon Düül II (a product of the left-wing commune scene) is "integrated" in what passes for the film's plot – through a title card stating that the band are playing on a spaceship destined for Planet Krüger 60. In sending a Krautrock band into space, Kluge's extrapolatory sci-fi patchwork is loyal to a moment of lived utopia,

intense, and frequently draining – as it no doubt often was. In siding with a ludic *Lebenspraxis*, the film suggests that there may yet be ways of making history otherwise, or of surviving "against the direction of the movement of history."[54]

Throughout his work, Kluge has engaged with military campaigns and specific historical battles – with war as state of contingency, as "the end of all plans." Yet what is even more crucial are histories that do not that place on the battlefield – that counter the very conception of history as history of sovereignty and command. As Kluge put it in the context of his critique of realism: "The potential and the historical roots and the detours of possibilities also belong to reality. The realistic result, the actual result, is only an abstraction that has murdered all other possibilities for the moment. But these possibilities will recur. Which is why I don't believe too much in documentary realism: because it doesn't describe reality. The most ideological illusion of all would be to believe that documentary realism is realism."[55] Such a documentary realism would be complicit with the "assault of the present on the rest of time" – if by present (*Gegenwart*) we understand a consensual reality enshrined in facticity.[56] Or, as Kluge would say, at any moment there are futures that are waiting to be born – biding their time, as it were.[57]

Given the challenges of dispelling the hegemonic *Gegenwartsrealität,* it makes sense to revisit past moments; past battles when history could have taken a different turn, but also less dramatic moments, voices, traces, artworks. As Philipp Ekardt has noted, certain works by Kluge constitute "a critique of the normative power of facticity" and that "What Kluge redeems […] from former days and works is their potential for future difference." More precisely, as Ekardt noted, "the category of possibility, understood as a potential, and, as such, unrealized anticipation of a later present, is assigned to the past."[58] Perhaps the greatest example of this is Kluge's 2008 DVD box set *News from Ideological Antiquity,* a gloriously ramshackle constellation of interviews, intertitles, and vignettes which revisits Eisenstein's unrealized plan for a film

version of Marx's *Capital.* Here, a historical project that remained in a state of potentiality is not so much belatedly "actualized," as sounded out for its (im)possible implications.

That Eisenstein was not able to produce the film is of course a reminder of "actually existing history" – the history of Permanent Pergamon, of capitalism, fascism, and Stalinism. This history marks the science-fiction films and novel even more profoundly, yet it is a history that is being appropriated and detourned through play. If, in Massimiliano Tomba's words, the past "presents itself as an arsenal of futures that have been blocked and that are allowed to reemerge by the subjects actually acting in the field of history, and not by the historian or spectator," this crucial point deserves to be nuanced: There are different ways of acting in the field of history, which is not just a series of battlefields.[59]

A Missing Multitude Looking to Compose Itself

On the evening of May 17, 2019, visitors positioned themselves in front of a long white wall, illuminated by spotlights, in the large exhibition space of the Akademie der Künste in the Tiergarten, Berlin.[60] They were attending Eran Schaerf's performance *Schnappschuss* (*Snapshot*), which took the form of the disembodied voice of a "mediator" seemingly coming from (behind) the wall. The piece was part of the exhibition *Elephant in the Room*, which also featured a number of films and short stories by Alexander Kluge featuring elephants – long a motif in his work.[61] Schaerf's voice in the void noted that soldiers in the American Civil War spoke of combat experience as "seeing the elephant," the narrator muses that this elephant now seems to have morphed into another proverbial pachyderm: the "elephant in the room." When Israeli soldiers try to share their experiences of "seeing the elephant," of dehumanizing others and dehumanizing themselves, and when the organization Breaking the Silence tries to exhibit

their photographs from the Occupied Territories, they are shut down by governments under pressure from – as the narrator sardonically suggests – "Friends of Israel," who don't have any Israeli friends.[62] The wall of the white cube becomes a projection screen for mental images evoked by the narrative about images that exist, but must not be seen.

By coincidence, *Schnappschuss* was first performed on the day the Bundestag condemned the BDS movement – a symbolic act with all too real consequences for critical Israeli artists and intellectuals based in Germany, such as Schaerf, and for German public discourse in general. In a situation of suffocating ideological hegemony, little McCarthy reenactors in the political and cultural establishment tar artists and thinkers such as Walid Raad and Achille Mbembe with the brush of antisemitism for any perceived or real support for BDS. The effect is a disturbing taboo on any serious investigation of the industrial mass murder of the Holocaust in the context of the wider necropolitical project of modern "scientific" racism in the colonial era, and of Germany's role in a

post-World War II and post-1989 world order that is only seemingly post-colonial. Subscribing to the doctrine that unconditional support for Israel is Germany's historical duty, the so-called *antideutsche* leftists have become enthusiastic cheerleaders for imperialism, helping to make Germany a country where decolonial voices from the Middle East or Africa are silenced.[63] In 2022, documenta fifteen in Kassel, curated by the Indonesian collective ruangrupa, provided the perfect occasion for a months-long crusade by German art critics and *Feuilleton* writers, who used admittedly problematic iconographic elements in certain activist images from the Middle East and Indonesia in an all-out onslaught on "decolonization" as such.

Discrediting any anti-imperialist criticism of settler colonialism and perpetuating an identification of Israel with "the Jewish people" obviously benefits only the right, as does the branding of the very concept of settler colonialism as "intellectual laziness" or, worse, an antisemitic trope.[64] Throughout 2022 and 2023, the German public sphere has become ever more McCarthyite, with new heights being reached in the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack and Israel's assault on Gaza. The very real problem of antisemitism is relentlessly weaponized against a supposed cabal of Muslims and lefties, even while the fascist AfD scores one election victory after another whilst blowing dog whistles and relativizing the Holocaust out of existence.[65] In this constellation, the German intelligentsia has largely opted for intellectual, ethical and political self-immolation.

During the pandemic, Covid-related conspiracism enabled boundary-blurring *Querfront* politics – with carefully orchestrated "dialogonalist" coalitions drawing former leftists and liberals into the orbit of the far right.[66] With its fanned fears about sinister forces, this milieu provided a perfect habitat for antisemitic tropes. In 2021, vegan-chef-turned-antisemitic-QAnon-conspiracy-theorist Attila Hildmann told his more than 100,000 followers on Telegram that the Pergamon Altar is in fact the "Throne of Satan," based on what may be a reference to the Altar in the *Book of Revelation*. Fearlessly extrapolating from this Biblical reference, Hildmann claimed

Rothschild-trained Zionist Satanists such as then-chancellor Angela Merkel – who lives near the Pergamon Museum, in the heart of the capital of reunified Germany – and other members of the elite gather there for nocturnal rituals involving human sacrifice and child abuse.[67] Having become a projection screen for the fascist imaginary, the Pergamon Altar thus becomes a contemporary actor and part of a new chapter in the Permanent Pergamon.

That same year, artist Zachary Formwalt returned to Weiss's reading of the frieze in his video piece *But where are the Hundred-Handed Ones?,* made for the aula of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, which boasts a ceiling painting by Anselm Feuerbach depicting the Fall of the Titans. Without any voice-over, though a montage of images and text fragments, Formwalt develops a critical engagement with Feuerbach's classicist-idealist take on the Gigantomachy. Taking cues from Weiss's poetico-historical materialism, Formwalt critiques the exclusion of the so-called Hecatonchires or hundred-headed ones – "the figures who actually carried out the brutal work of defeating the Titans at Zeus's request. These bodies of hands who Zeus put to work to secure the conditions of Olympian rule through the violent suppression of 'the raw forces of nature' as Anselm Feuerbach (…) put it."[68]

The history of the Pergamon Altar is suffused with actual and imaginary gatherings. Apart from the sacrifices performed at the alter in its original function, we have Weiss's fictional 1930s clandestine and furtive meetings in public, and Hildmann's imaginary nocturnal rituals by a Satanic and Semitic elite – imaginary gatherings that served to boost the attendance of his own rallies in Berlin, with the attendants picturing themselves as the real people, *das wahre Volk.* Meanwhile, Formwalt's film, shown in the aula of the academy during the COVID pandemic that fueled Hildmann's protests, will have been seen and discussed by an art-school audience that is both more and less diverse. Like the audience assembling for Schnappschuss on the day that the Bundestag condemned BDS, these are all fragments of *une multitude qui manque* – a missing multitude unable to compose itself.

The 1997 film *Krumme Pranke*, made by Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann with Josef Strau and Amelie von Wulffen, contains footage showing the Pergamon Altar, with museum visitors walking around listening to audio guides; the suggestion is that they are in fact listening to the film's voice-over, which links Weiss's take on Pergamon to the new wave of capital accumulation (manifested in a construction boom) occurring in post-reunification Berlin, and which functions as an alternative audio guide. The suggestion of intervening in the space of cultural tourism, of today's empire, is a tempting one. A situation in which (some) of the visitors listen to critical instead of mainstream audio guides, would be a kind of reenactment of the situation described by Weiss: covert criticality in the space of hegemony, an underground counter-publicness.

As the social contract that underpinned the postwar *soziale Marktwirtschaft* ("social market economy") collapses under the neoliberal onslaught, there is a lack of cogent and compelling narratives that can fill the void left behind the fairytale of "permanent growth and wealth for all." While we dimly sense that we are already inside the catastrophe, we also know that it is going to get worse. As the chickens of permanent war on the planet and

subaltern populations are coming home to roost, it is once again fascist movements and parties who offer the most successful ideological product. Such movements proffer the alluring promise of saving privilege, however relative that privilege may be. If the offer is too good to be true in the long run, for now others can be made to pay so that you can stay on the right side of the divide between masters and slaves. Remembering the coming bloodshed and suffering may yet help us to rehearse differently, to introduce deviations that fork into different futures.

Endnotes

1 The YouTube comments say "This song makes me want to…"; Bilir-Meier left out "song." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp7eSUU9oy8 [4.8.2020]

2 T.J. Demos, *Radical Futurisms: Ecologies of Collapse, Chronopolitics, and Justice-to-Come* (London: Sternberg Press, 2023), p. 14.

3 On the reception of *Die Ermittlung* in East and West, see the documentation and analysis in Christoph Weiß, *Auschwitz in der geteilten Welt. Peter Weiß und die 'Ermittlung' im Kalten Krieg* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2000), 2 vols. In 1966, the play was televized (in different stagings) in both East and West Germany.

4 See Peter Weiss, *Die Ermittlung. Oratorium in 11 Gesängen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965), pp. 85–86.

5 Weiß, *Auschwitz in der geteilten Welt,* vol. 1, p. 210.

6 See Eran Schaerf, "Verblendet beim Erinnern der Gegenwart? Frag Franz," in *Gesammeltes Deutsch* (Vienna: Transversal texts, 2023), p. 118.

7 The *Das Tribunal* title is documented by Weiß in *Auschwitz in der geteilten Welt,* p 123. With Peter Limqueco, Weiss edited the Russell Tribunal's proceedings: *Prevent the Crime of Silence: Reports from the Sessions of the International War Crimes Tribunal Founded by Bertrand Russell* (London/Stockholm/Roskilde: Allen Lane, 1971).

8 See, for instance, Peter Weiss, "Che Guevara!," in *Kursbuc*h no. 11 (January 1968), *Revolution in Lateinamerika,* pp. 1–6.

9 Peter Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstand*s (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016), p. 15. My references are to the first volume, which appeared in West Germany in the Suhrkamp Verlag in 1975. Volumes two and three followed in 1978 and 1981, respectively. Eventually, a complete edition in one volume was allowed to appear in the GDR, in the Henschel Verlag in 1983. While Weiss's descriptions of Stalinist politics during the 1930s was sensitive stuff for the East German Communist Party (SED), the book was not censored. Shortly before his death, Weiss was able to correct questionable edits in Suhrkamp's West German edition, in the third volume in particular. The 2016 single-volume Suhrkamp edition has been compiled on the basis of these two prior versions. English translation is from Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Durham NC: Duke University Press), 2005, p 8.

10 For this reception history, see, for instance, Lionel Gossman, "Imperial Icon: The Pergamon Altar in Wilhelminian Germany," in *The Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006), no. 3, pp. 551–587; Alina Payne, "Portable Ruins: The Pergamon Altar, Heinrich Wölfflin, and German Art History at the

fin de siècle," in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 53/54 (Spring/Autumn 2008), pp. 168–189; as well as an earlier article by Max Kunze that includes a discussion of Weiss's *Aesthetics*: "Wirkungen des Pergamonaltars auf Kunst und Literatur," in *Forschungen und Berichte* 26 (1987), pp. 57–74.

11 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 67; English translation from *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, p. 45.

12 See Jonathan Haslam, "The Comintern and the Origins of the Popular Front 1934–1935," in *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979), no. 3, pp. 673–691.

13 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 157; translation from *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, p. 109.

14 The phrase is "Verselbstständigung und Isolierung"; Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 91.

15 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 91.

16 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 71.

17 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 346; translation from *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, p. 245.

18 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p 375; translation from *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, p. 266 (adapted by the author).

19 Robert Buch briefly comments on the proleptic traits of *The Aesthetics of Resistance* in *The Pathos of the Real: On the Aesthetics of Violence in the Twentieth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 115.

20 Benjamin's phrase – the "tradition of the oppressed" from the "Theses on the Concept of History" (1940) – plays an important role in T.J. Demos, *Radical Futurisms.*

21 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, p. 17; translation from *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, p. 9. A prefiguration of Weiss's take on the frieze can be found in an essay by Asger Jorn, which originally appeared in the Swedish magazine *Byggmästaren* in 1947, in which Jorn notes in passing that the Olympians' struggle with the Giants (and its Nordic counterpart) "symbolizes nothing more or less than the dread felt by the ruling class of an underclass, which from time to time attempts to storm Olympia's hallowed portals and thus unleash the twilight of the gods; in other words a revolution, a day of judgement." Jorn, "Apollo or Dionysus," in Ruth Baumeister (ed.), *Fraternité Avant Tout: Asger Jorn's Writings on Art and Architecture*, trans. Paul Larkin (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2011), p. 154

22 Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, pp. 396–409.

23 Weiss, *Die Ermittlung*, p. 86.

24 See Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*p, pp. 409–446.

25 See Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold Story of European Integration and Colonialism*, (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2014).

26 Historical inquiries into the German left, Israel and Jews tend to come with an agenda. Wolfgang Kraushaar's book *Die Bombe in jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005) contains a detailed reconstruction of what is arguably an antisemitic act of terror by a group of radical leftists. In hindsight – and I confess I was blind to this when I reviewed the book at the time – it is clear that this case is instrumentalized by the author not just to discredit soixante-huitard politics in general, but anti-imperialist critiques of Israeli settler colonialism as such. Recent Kraushaar texts such as "Gegen den intellektuellen Dammbruch," in which he defends a "good" version of Critical Theory (as defined by Germans such as him) against the "Hamas-supporting Judith Butler," reach Steve Bannon-esque levels of intellectual dishonesty. See Wolfgang Kraushaar, „gegen den intellektuelln Dammbruch," in *Perlentaucher*, June 10, 2024, https://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/eine-laudatio-auf-lars-henrik-gass-von-wolfgang-kraushaar.html

27 See Julia Friedrich (ed.), *Hier und Jetzt im Museum Ludwig: Günter Peter Straschek* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2018).

28 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, (London: Athlone Press, 1989), pp. 216, 217.

29 This January 26, 1924, Jena lecture was posthumously published as "Über die moderne Kunst" (Bern-Bümpliz: Benteli, 1945); see p 53. Using an imperfect translation, the English edition of Deleuze's *Cinema 2* (p. 215, note 41) renders the phrase as "the people are not with us," whereas the French translation used by Deleuze says "Faute d'un people qui nous porte": See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), p 283. In 2009, ExtraCity in Antwerp organized a Straub/Huillet exhibition under the Deleuzian title *Of a People Who Are Missing*.

30 Brecht's incomplete *Die Geschäfte des Julius Caesar* (1938–1939) has a complex structure; in the *Rahmenhandung*, a young lawyer seeks out witnesses of Caesar's rise. In *Geschichtsunterricht*, this Roman lawyer has been turned into a young man in contemporary garb who anachronistically interviews ancient Romans.

31 Deleuze, *Cinema 2,* p. 243.

32 See Peter C. Lutze, *Alexander Kluge: The Last Modernist* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), p. 225 (note 9). Kluge continued to tweak the films or make new items for his TV programs on the basis of the material well into the 1990s.

33 On Adorno's contacts with the HfG, see Christiane Wachsmann, *Vom Bauhaus beflügelt. Menschen und Ideen an der Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm* (Stuttgart: avedition, 2018), pp. 73–74.

34 Wachsmann, *Vom Bauhaus beflügelt*, p. 215; see also pp. 218–237 on the HfG's closure and the subsequent use of the buildings.

35 Alexander Kluge, email to the author, March 28, 2019.

36 See, for instance, the dossier compiled by Jürgen Holtkamp, „Die Eröffnung des rhodesischen Zeitalters oder Einübung in die freie Welt. Science Fiction-Literatur in Deutschland," in *Kursbuch* no. 14 (August 1968), pp. 45–63. A somewhat more ambiguous fascination can be discerned in Hartmut Sander and Ulrich Christians (eds.), *Subkultur Berlin – Selbstdarstellung, Text- Ton- Bilddokumente, Esoterik der Kommunen Rocker subversiven Gruppen* (Berlin: März Verlag, 1969), pp. 42–51, 82.

37 Kluge, email to the author.

38 Kluge, email to the author.

39 Alexander Kluge, "Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang" (1973), in *Chronik der Gefühle, Band II: Lebensläufe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 876; translation by Christopher Pavsek, *Learning Processes with a Deadly Outcome* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 55.

40 Kluge, "Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang," p. 842.

41 The very title *Willi Tobler und der Untergang der 6. Flotte* evokes the Sixth Army of Stalingrad. While the first (1964) and most subsequent editions of *Schlachtbeschreibung* bear that title, in 1969, while working on *Tobler,* Kluge republished it under the title *Der Untergang der sechsten Armee* (Munich: R. Piper & Co.). He would rework the book quite radically for the 1978 edition (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), which contained images much like *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang*. In fact, some of the images were identical, as was some of the text: rather than ending with the "Untergang der sechsten Armee," Kluge now included the postwar stories of the Stalingrad veterans from *Lernprozesse*. A further variation occurred in 2000, when Kluge integrated both *Schlachtbeschreibung* and *Lernprozesse* in his monumental two-volume *Chronik der Gefühle* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp); to avoid duplication, the material from the latter was excised from the former.

42 Alexander Kluge, *Schlachtbeschreibung,* in *Chronik der Gefühle, Band 1: Basisgeschichten*, p. 511.

43 Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung. Zur Organisationanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 59; English translation by Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel and Assenka Oksiloff, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward and Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 28.

44 Negt and Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*, p. 67; see also pp. 290–294. In the context of the postwar West German welfare state, Kluge – the lawyer – sought to create conditions in which such a reappropriation could take place, in however compromised and imperfect a form, using public subsidies and legal loopholes, and taking advantage of the situation at the ex-HfG.

45 Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1981), p. 23. For an extensive comparison of *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* and *Geschichte und Eigensinn,* see Richard Langston, "The Work of Art as Theory of Work: Relationality in the Works of Weiss and Negt & Kluge," in *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 83 (2008), no. 3, pp. 195–216.

46 See Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, pp. 88–114.

47 See Kluge, "Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang," pp. 864–865, 878–881.

48 A related book, *Projekt Groß Weiss-Afrika*, charts an inept last-ditch effort to consolidate white colonial holdings in Africa in what was then the just-future of the mid-1970s. *Projekt Groß Weiss-Afrika* was part of the book *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1973), which, to confuse matters, contained more than just "Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang."

49 Thomas Elsaesser, "The Stubborn Persistence of Alexander Kluge," in Tara Forrest (ed.), *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 28.

50 As Kluge puts it, rather wonderfully, "all people relate to their experience like authors – rather than like managers of department stores." Alexander Kluge, "On Film and the Public Sphere," in Forrest, *Alexander Kluge*: *Raw Materials for the Imagination*, p. 34.

51 Elsaesser, "The Stubborn Persistence of Alexander Kluge," p. 27.

52 Even if there is no doubt that Kluge is the one trying to manage and structure the production, the very fact that he has kept re-editing *Willi Tobler* over the decades suggests that these films represent a limit case for his practice.

53 Kluge, email to the author.

54 Kluge, "Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang," p. 829; English translation from Pavsek, *Learning Processes with a Deadly Outcome*, p. xiii.

55 Jan Dawson, "Interview: Alexander Kluge," in *Film Comment*, November-December 1974, https://www.filmcomment.com/article/a-blast-from-the-past-alexander-kluge-interview/

56 *Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit* (1985), translated as *The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time*, is one of Kluge's great film titles.

57 Zoom conversation with Alexander Kluge, September 2023.

58 Philipp Ekardt, *Toward Fewer Images: The Work of Alexander Kluge* (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press, 2018), p. 195.

59 Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 13.

60 The first performance took place on the evening of May 17, 2019 during the opening; it was repeated over the coming days. I attended the opening performance and allowed murky memories and hasty notes to inform my text: in the original version of this essay, I suggested that the narrator (who is called a "Vermittler," or mediator) identifies himself with Walter Benjamin's figure of *Der Erzähler* (The Narrator), whereas he in fact describes this figure, placing it in front of the spectators' eyes.

61 A number of short films were exhibited, and eight accompanying stories were published on pages 8–12 of the newspaper–style publication *Elefant im Raum*, which was available as part of the exhibition. The story about a fire in an elephant house in Chicago goes back all the way to Kluge's film *Die Artisten in der Zirkuskuppel: Ratlos* (Artists under the Big Top: Perplexed, 1968).

62 "Hätten die Freunde Israels israelische Freunde…" Eran Schaerf, "Schnappschuss," in *Gesammeltes Deutsch*, p. 85. The performance script constitutes pp. 75–98 of this version of "Schnappschuss." It was originally published in Schaerf's *Mischmasch der Elefant*, a separate newspaper published in the context of *Der Elefant im Raum*.

63 See Dominic Johnson, "Zum Schweigen gebracht," in *die tageszeitung*, May 3, 2020, https://taz.de/Debatte-um-Achille-Mbembe/!5679782/; and "Rassistische Vorstellungen hängen nicht nur an Hautfarbe," an interview with Mark Terkessidis by Jög Häntzschel, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 16, 2020. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/rassismus-deutschland-mark-terkessidis-1.4940017?reduced=true

On the role played by the art magazine *Texte zur Kunst*, see See Dani Gal, Emily Jacir, Sami Khatib, Jumana Manna, Natascha Sadr Haghighian, Marc Siegel, "Response #1 to the postscript," in *Texte zur Kunst Docs*, https://tzkdocumentation.wordpress.com/2020/09/24/reply-1-to-post-script-invitation/

64 As Eran Schaerf puts it in his response to the *Texte zur Kunst* issue: To characterize any boycott of Israel as an updated *Judenboykott* perpetuates the conflation of Israel and "the Jews," with pontificating German politicians and opinion leaders denying the specific position(s) of Jews living outside of Israel. As Schaerf avers, Germany needs Israel as "the state of Holocaust survivors" in order to keep perpetuating a rhetoric of *Wiedergutmachung* (reparation) that remains stuck in a loop, as if the course of history can

be stopped through sheer rote repetition. See Schaerf, "Verblendet beim Erinnern der Gegenwart? Frag Franz," p. 112.

65 AfD politician Alexander Gauland infamously called it a *Fliegenschiss* or "flyspeck."

66 For a good analysis of "diagonalism" from a US perspective, see Kathryn Joyce and Jeff Sharlett, "Losing the Plot: The "Leftists" Who Turn Right," in *In These Times*, December 12, 2023, https://inthesetimes.com/article/former-left-right-fascism-capitalism-horseshoe-theory

67 See screenshot of Hildmann's Telegram account, 24 August 2020, https://www.bz-berlin.de/berlin/mehr-als-70-objekte-auf-museumsinsel-beschaedigt. In certain American far-right evangelical circles, the obsession with the Pergamon Altar as "Throne of Satan" linked to Godless/liberal/socialist politicians goes back at least to the Obama years; see, https://stop-obama-now.net/obamas-shrine-to-satan/

68 Zachary Formwalt, email to the author, November 22, 2021.

Potential Possibilities, Improbable Potentialities

After World War II, Hendrik de Man proposed that humanity had entered the stage of *posthistoire.* De Man was a Belgian socialist politician and theoretician who had become increasingly disenchanted with Marxism, and whose elitist conception of history and nondemocratic notion of the state had made him a Fascist collaborator during the Nazi occupation of Belgium. During the 1930s, he had glorified the Plan as the means of top-down economic and social planning on a grand scale; after the collapse of the Nazi Empire, disgraced and isolated, he noted that history is by definition man-made, and that it no longer appeared possible to assert human agency in the wake of WWII and Hiroshima.[1]

In theorizing the *posthistoire*, de Man invoked the nineteenth-century mathematician Antoine Augustin Cournot, a theorist of chance who had introduced probability into economic analysis. Marx identified the coming end of the "antagonistic" bourgeois mode of production and the proletariat's assertion of historical agency with the "end of prehistory." Cournot likewise posited an end to antagonism, but it took a very different form: that of a society of permanent feedback and self-regulation.[2] Cournot did not himself use the term *posthistoire*, but he

did argue that history as *une histoire*, a chronicle, was ending as society approached a state marked by statistical data, regulations, and nominations, to be logged in an official gazette. As society keeps getting more organized and therefore more predictable, it ends up operating "like a beehive, a virtually geometric pattern."[3] This view of society sometimes seems to prefigure both socialist planning and contemporary notions of swarm intelligence, pattern recognition, and forecasting on the basis of big data – which in turn have given rise to platform-socialist visions. For de Man, it was clear that all of Cournot's calculations and patterns do not amount to conscious human control over society. Hiroshima signaled that *posthistoire* would not be the end of history-as-conflict, but conflict unchained from any all-too-human sequence of events.[4] This lack of human agency is precisely what makes it properly posthistorical – and dystopian.[5]

Far from being synonymous with "the past," history is unfinished business, an ongoing process in which accounts of the past, historical narratives and visions of the future may shape current actions.[6] Fredric Jameson always insisted on the weakening of the "sense of history," or of "historical consciousness," in postmodernity, which is marked by a spatialization of culture and by a focus on presentness over long duration: "In this new dialectic of omnipresent space and the living or temporal present, history, historicity, the sense of history, is the loser: the past is gone, we can no longer imagine the future."[7] The sequence "history, historicity, the sense of history" is intriguing, as it is not quite clear whether these are meant as synonyms or as a progression. The implication seems to be that the decline of the sense of history has real-world effects, resulting in short-termism and blindness to consequences – producing a history devoid of futurity, a history beyond human agency. The decline of historical consciousness and the acceleration of (post-)historical events go hand in hand.

De Man's 1951 book *Vermassung und Kulturverfall* (Massification and Cultural Decline) contains a schema of this acceleration of history, which I will here translate and transpose. In

the German original, all lines begin with "Entstehung der…" or "Entstehung des…," which can mean the origin, creation or emergence of; in this way, de Man ties together cosmological and evolutionary events with human inventions.

Origin of the Earth approximately	2 000 000 000
Oldest living organisms	600 000 000
Emergence of mammals	150 000 000
Emergence of quadrupeds	5 000 000
Emergence of humans	650 000
Neanderthal man	100 000
Cro-Magnon ("artistic") man	45 000
Oldest historical culture	6 000
Occidental culture	950
Invention of railways	126
Invention of automobiles	64
Invention of the airplane	46
Invention of the atom bomb	7

Aesthetically and epistemologically, this is a striking mix of sense and senselessness. Having recently worked for the Belgian branch of the Thousand-Year Reich, de Man must have been acutely aware of the ephemerality of world-historical projects in the vastness of time and space. As his timeline runs out of history – human history – it surreptitiously becomes more anthropocentric, and ultimately "anthropocenic." For de Man, his data shows an accelerating movement that spirals even further out of control after Hiroshima, and must be near its end. While this is a particularly graphic illustration of acceleration, de Man did not originate the trope: In 1948, the reactionary French writer Daniel Halévy published a book titled *L'accélération de l'histoire*, with which de Man was quite likely familiar – though the trope also antedates Halévy.[8] What is of particular interest in de Man's case is that his typographic rendering strikingly shows the conjunction of

linearity and acceleration. Bouton asks if "it is possible to have acceleration without awareness of acceleration or, conversely, a sensation of acceleration without objective acceleration."[9] This is not, in fact, an either/or question.

Theoreticians of history have long distinguished between the *res gestae* (history as it actually happened) and the *historia rerum gestarum* (history as a story told, as recapitulation and narration). However, modernity is marked by an exacerbated form of historical feedback: Linear and teleological conceptions of history – ideological narratives – in turn influence the unfolding of history, driving "progress" and, with it, exploitation, expropriation, and accumulation. If the modern conception of history is that of a train following a linear track, as Lazzarato put it, de Man's chart shows the train speeding up ever more, emitting more and more smoke as it goes along. Intriguingly, de Man plots the process of acceleration on a vast temporal scale, reaching back to the very origin of the Earth. While Cournot had limited history to human history, and even to a "properly" historical phase between early primitive societies and the dawning era of statistical control, this anthropocentric perspective was already challenged in the nineteenth century by the discovery of geological deep time and the reconstruction of extinct species. In the scientific study of nature, time's arrow triumphed over time's cycle – to invoke Stephen Jay Gould's classic study – as the historicity of the nonhuman world was asserted.[10]

However, it was only with the widespread acknowledgement of anthropogenic climate change in the early twenty-first century that, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has insisted, the distinction between natural history and human history truly collapsed. Deep time was now seen to accelerate; time's arrow catches fire in mid-flight.[11] Today's graphs showing rising CO2 or sea levels are the "actually existing" realization of linear, progressive and accelerating time. To complicate matters, the effects accumulate over time and manifest themselves as delays and eruptions: Global warming is "seriously backloaded," as we are experiencing the cumulative effects

of centuries of emissions, as carbon dioxide lingers in the atmosphere. Climate change, in Andreas Malm's words, is a "messy mix-up of time scales," which disincentivizes radical action.[12] Yes, the acceleration of climate change is increasingly felt – but if we're paying the price for past generations' behavior, why should "we" be the suckers who suffer for the future in the here and now?

This, of course, presupposes a habitus of calculation and optimization that is not necessarily universal. It is the habitus of a certain world and a certain history – a capitalist world and a history of growth. How to make *other expectations* of the future operational? How to identify potential other histories, potentialities trapped in the gridlocked present?

Lines of Acceleration

The last event on de Man's timeline coincides more or less with the starting date for the Anthropocene, as determined by the Anthropocene Working Group. With geologists looking for a "golden spike" of data embedded in the Earth's crust, the committee has privileged the traces of radionuclides that start showing up by 1945-50 over, for instance, earlier effects of colonial genocide, or the industrial revolution and its decisive embrace of coal over other sources of power.[13] There are many issues here, not least the very term Anthropocene, with its universalizing drift – as opposed to Capitalocene or Plantationocene, for instance.[14] Nonetheless, the data does indeed show a "great acceleration" around 1950, as analyzed by Will Steffen and his co-authors.[15] In order to make this acceleration stand out visually, they plot their data in graphs that always start in 1750, which makes the accelerating population growth, GDP or energy use visible at a single glance. The same goes for the graphs showing "Earth system trends": the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere merrily keeps on rising, as do the lines for nitrous oxide, ocean acidification, and surface temperature.[16] Meanwhile, the ideologues of green capitalism like to point out descending curves for CO2 emissions in certain

Western countries, conveniently forgetting that a) such lower C02 emissions still accumulate in the atmosphere, and b) emissions in countries like China are through the roof.

The era of the Great Acceleration also saw the emergence of cybernetics and systems theory, which promised tools to analyze what would come to be called the *Limits to Growth* – the title of the 1972 report to the Club of Rome. Building on their work for the war effort (developing self-guided missiles, for instance), intellectual technocrats such as Norbert Wiener sought to develop analytical tools and protocols for the "steersmanship" that was needed in the new age of communication and control.[17] As Orit Halpern notes, the central cybernetic notion of feedback as the adjustment of future conduct by past performance was supposed to have put an end to causality, but not to teleology: Rather than a causal universe ruled by intentional *acts*, Wiener's cybernetics posited a probabilistic world of *effects*.[18] This, then, was a positive version of Cournot's vision, though one that can easily be glossed in de Man's dystopian terms.

By the late 1960s, cybernetics and the overarching framework of Systems Theory – as the supposedly unifying meta-discipline of the postwar era – provided inspiration for Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*, which proclaimed that "the health of the system is forward," and used the photo of Earth as seen from space to indicate the need for a holistic and global systems approach. Promising "access to tools," the *Whole Earth Catalog* encouraged its hippie-communalist readers to send feedback on the products the catalog promoted, and suggestions for additions and improvements in future editions and supplements. Always close to the research institutes and corporations of Silicon Valley, Brand would establish the online platform WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link) in 1985.[19] This, in itself, was an acceleration: from written feedback and print publications to real-time online exchanges. By the end of that decade, Brand had become concerned with the myopic short-termism of an accelerating culture, and with Daniel Hillis he set about designing and constructing a mechanical clock,

The Clock of the Long Now, which is meant to run for ten thousand years in order to counter contemporary society's "pathologically short attention span" deriving from "the acceleration of technology, the short-horizon perspective of market-driven economics, the next-election perspective of democracies, or the distractions of personal multitasking."[20]

Located below a remote limestone mountain in Texas and partially funded by Jeff Bezos – obviously! – the Clock project recalls land art pieces from Robert Smithson to Agnes Denes, both in terms of its remote location and its evocation of long durations. Brand and Hillis note that their chosen ten-thousand-year span is "about the age of civilization," which seems to mean that they see the Neolithic revolution as the starting point of "our civilization."[21] Letting the clock run for another ten thousand years, starting now, raises the question whether "civilization" can survive that long. The Clock of the Long Now can thus be placed in a dialectical constellation with the symbolic Doomsday Clock, published by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists since 1947: In this period, the dial counting the minutes and seconds to midnight (i.e., doomsday) has been set backward eight times and forward seventeen times.[22]

If the Long Now project seems defiantly optimistic in nature, the logic at play is ultimately one of prolonging the capitalist and neoliberal now. Brand's universalizing abstractions barely gloss over the fact that what is proposed is the temporal extension of a corporate-liberal status quo. It is telling that Brand became a propagandist for space colonization in the 1970s, suggesting that the "Whole Earth" was destined to be left to its own entropic fate by the elite of (American) space pioneers. More recently, he has advocated "deextinction" as a viable strategy for bringing back species that have been snuffed out by the long march of humans across the face of the planet – again, in the last 10,000 years or so, from mammoths to the dodo, the eastern cougar and the passenger pigeon.[23] Within the Anthropocene, time becomes reversible, and the science that was instrumental in many of the extinctions in question is rebranded as savior, undoing some of the damage. Tellingly, Brand's old pet project of space colonization has been taken up once more by Silicon Valley entrepreneurs such as Elon Musk.[24] The long now belongs to the global super-elite, which is already preparing to desert an uninhabitable Earth while the rest of us try to survive on a dying planet.

Brand and Hillis's consternation at short-termism was all the greater as they had placed much stock in the emancipatory potential of the digital revolution. Hillis, the clock's designer, is a computer scientist who made important contributions to parallel computing in the 1980s. With parallel computing – in the form of multi-core processors – being necessary for today's big data-driven capitalism, Hillis can rightly be termed a veteran of acceleration. The Long Now is a thus a direct response to the preponderance of algorithmic trading: banking with and on timespans beneath the threshold of human perception, measured in micro- or milliseconds.[25] The future is ever shrinking, moving even closer to the micro level, and short-termist microfutures are everywhere: in finance and economic policy, in personal careers, in environmental politics. By "microfutures" I refer not only to financial speculation on the scale of milliseconds, but also to the general reversal of futurity into a

series of "shorts," of momentary advantages to the detriment of anything that might constitute a bigger picture.

The general logic of techno-financial microfutures has also asserted itself in the rise of options and futures markets (in contrast to futures, options grant the right – but not the obligation – to buy shares at a fixed price on a set date). Today's options markets rely on algorithms based on the mathematical model developed by Fischer Black and Myron Scholes in the early 1970s. Their formula calculated the average volatility of stock, thus allowing investors to predict a future price, making the options market much more attractive. The model had a performative effect on the construction of derivatives markets.[26] The Black-Scholes model became operational in the context of the Chicago Board Options Exchange, which opened in 1973; Brian Holmes points out that Fischer Black sold traders paper printouts of his estimates.[27] In Holmes's words, the Black-Scholes model was a "world model" that became a reality.[28] The reality created by this model is limited and fragile, as it assumes a statistic regularity and continuity based on the past; it cannot predict crashes, or any of the social, political, and ecological upheavals that might have an impact on the seemingly autonomous and automated sphere of finance. It also cannot encompass its own effects on the market – a feedback loop to which it is blind.[29]

Around the same time, *Limits to Growth*, the 1972 report to the Club of Rome, used a "world model" called World3, developed at MIT, which made possible computer simulations of various futures – usually on the basis of expected exponential growth in population and pollution, and depletion of resources. Depending on what kind of feedback the world model was given, the seemingly unavoidable ending could be faster or slower – but on a planet that, in terms of resources, constituted a closed system, the depletion of resources was impossible to prevent altogether. The MIT team sought to curb "the *positive* feedback loops that are generating the growth," which meant reducing population growth and the growth of industrial capital.[30] Different scenarios were calculated and turned into graphs. Once technological

innovations were added to strict restrictions on population and industry, a "stabilized world model" resulted; a state of equilibrium in which resources decline at a slow and constant (rather than accelerating) rate, but in which the other factors are in balance. The chapter on "the state of global equilibrium" adds a final figure after the graph that showed how sustainable equilibrium could be achieved, which was based on the assumption that relevant policies would be instituted in 1975. The final figure, on the other hand, showed the consequences of delaying this until the year 2000, by which time "the equilibrium state is no longer sustainable."[31]

What mattered to the authors of the Club of Rome report was the adoption of policies that would slow down undesirable developments to a pace that would benefit at least the next few generations. Five decades later, this liberal-technocratic appeal to reason and moderation has evidently been an abject failure. At the same time, we seem to live inside the Club of Rome's world model. The Capitalocene has seen a resurgence of timelines that plot long-term developments in their seemingly inexorable linearity. By "linearity" I do not refer to linear as opposed to nonlinear graphs in a mathematical sense, but rather to the fundamentally linear nature of all graphs in which data are plotted on a temporal axis, on time's arrow, whether they show regularly climbing lines, exponential curves, or wild oscillations. Nonlinear processes, too, follow the direction of time's arrow, as shown in all those temporal graphs that accompany the discourse on global warming – graphs that have their own efficacy, agency, and allure, which has profoundly ambiguous results: After all, these curves appear to move autonomously, beyond human agency. As the climate becomes hotter and more turbulent, extreme weather events accumulating with predictable unpredictability, Western subjects are caught in Malm's messy mix, mesmerized by ascending and crashing curves. This is the fetishism of graphs.

The *Limits to Growth* team dealt with feedback between ecological and politico-economic systems, but had no real concept of

the latter as antagonistic and historical. Furthermore, the World3 model depended on factors being constant or increasing or decreasing with some regularity; it has to exclude the contingent. In the same period, Royal Dutch Shell was already engaging in *Planspiele* that focused precisely on predicting the unpredictable. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Shell also retained James Lovelock as a consultant with the brief to study atmospheric emissions by the fossil fuel industry as well as by natural (micro) organisms; Lovelock suggested that the biosphere functioned as a "biological cybernetic system," and that forms of biological feedback resulted in a "thermostat-like entity working to maintain the planet's temperature."[32] The Gaia Hypothesis, which would be embraced by Stewart Brand's *CoEvolution Quarterly* in its Summer 1975 issue and would go on to have a storied and multivalent career, thus originated in the context of an attempt to relativize the impact of human- or corporate-made climate change. After all, Mother Nature will fix it. While the early Gaia hypothesis thus seemed to promise a systemic stability that could not be rattled by capitalism's fossil fuel frenzy, Pierre Wack and his scenario planning team at Shell plotted out a variety of conceivable risks to their company. For the scenario planners at Shell, World3's suggestion of rigorously scientific long-term prediction was a sham, and not conducive to meeting any actual challenges. Was it not the final manifestation of a postwar Keynsian capitalism with its focus on planning?

Rather than feeding data into a computer, Wack imagined likely and unlikely plots that included one with a sharp decrease in oil delivery from OPEC countries; this is said to have helped Shell master the 1973 oil crisis better than their competitors.[33] Peter Schwarz, who took over from Wack in 1982, insisted that "Scenarios are *not* predictions": Rather, they are about surviving unpredictability. Instead of creating world models that extrapolate from the present on the basis of mathematical probability, Wack and Schwarz used the writer's craft to get decision-makers to consider "alternative images."[34] In 1991, Schwarz authored *The*

Art of the Long View: *Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World*, and he became a sparring partner for Brand and Hillis in the Long Now Foundation.[35] Brand and Hillis's "long now," then, has strong connections with the corporate version of postwar futurology. The long now is about prolongation: prolonging precisely the Capitalocene by attending to its symptoms. Scenario planning incorporates social antagonism and historical contingency only to manage these factors. This is its legacy: Scenario planning has merged with the potentialized language models of big data to spawn a hegemonic political and corporate culture of generalized risk management.

Leviathan and Multitude

Tech entrepreneurs are now pumping billions into think tanks promulgating an ideology known as Longtermism, originating at Oxford University.[36] As "the parlor philosophy of choice among the Silicon Valley jet-pack set," Longtermism revolves around calculations that quantify the future lives that may be lost due to the wrong decisions being taken in the present.[37] While one of Longtermism's biggest patrons, Elon Musk, is obsessively focused on stemming what he sees as the threat of global (human) population decline, Longtermists such as Nick Bostrom and William MacAskill do not only take the possibility/necessity of Musk's beloved space colonization into account, but also that of "software lives."[38] Thus, they use more encompassing terms such as "Earth-originating intelligent life" or speculate on future forms of "digital sentience" that "would have at least comparable moral status to humans."[39]

While the Muskian specter of the Singularity haunt Longtermism, this school of thought is nonetheless predicated on a conception of "intelligent life" that is expansionist both in that that it potentially encompasses artificial intelligence and in that it requires space colonization to make room for all those *human* lives: "The potential for approximately 1038 human lives is lost every century

that colonization of our local supercluster is delayed."[40] For Longtermism, "[the] potential of software minds and space colonies dwarfs every other pressing issue of the present," in Yannick Fritz's words.[41] In the process, the concept of potentiality is recaptured and refunctionalized in the service of algorithmic governance by a planetary elite of AI-pushing space colonizers. In this context, what potential does the very concept of potentiality still hold?

In 1798, Friedrich Schlegel famously characterized the historian as "a prophet turned backwards," yet the exacerbated historical consciousness that emerged around 1800 has always had a forward-looking side.[42] This could take the form of whiggish, idealist or indeed (sub-)Marxist teleologies, but engagement with the future need not take such prescriptive and restrictive forms of historicism. What one could term *potentialism* is a historicism open to unprecedented actualizations and long latencies, to events transcending their conditions and to processes of becoming that are not always reducible to classical conceptions of class.

In the twenty-first century, one can hardly say "potentiality" without evoking Agamben, whose use of the concept draws on historical thinkers even while it occludes some of the complexity of the history of potentialism. At the core of Agamben's potentialism is a re-reading of Aristotle's pair of *dunamis* (potentiality) and *energeia* (actuality). In his *Metaphysics,* Aristotle attacked the problem of being in various ways – distinguishing between potentiality and actuality, but also between form (*morphe*) and matter (*hyle*). In the latter register, that of hylomorphism, form comes to play the part of a thing's essence, its "primary substance": It is only by being in-formed that matter amounts to anything.[43] In terms of *dunamis/energeia*, matter is potentiality, only attaining actuality through form; nature is the process of the actualization of possibilities.[44] In a diachronic interpretation of substance as contingent upon realization, *dunamis* and *energeia* (potentiality and actuality) can thus be seen as a *temporalization* of *hyle* and *morphe* (matter and form). Building materials are a potential building, but the form must be brought out in the process of construction.[45]

The scholasticism of the High Middle Ages was a christianized Aristotelianism, its conception of natural philosophy revolving around the progressive actualization of potentialities, with the "set of *potentiae* belonging to each individual" ultimately being grounded in its specific "substantial form."[46] In Aquinas's philosophy of nature, "the stone's substantial form explains why it falls to the ground, but equally the acorn's substantial form explains why it grows to be an oak tree. When natural change occurs, this is conceived as a potentiality being actualized, or a power being put in act."[47] Since Aristotle, human beings had been a particularly knotty case for hylomorphic theory; after all, what is the human substantial form? It should not be mistaken for some archetypal form of the human body; what is needed is a principle that makes the human being more than a corpse, or a zombie, or a statue. For Aristotle, "the body as such only potentially has life and it is the presence of soul that fulfils this potentiality."[48] The hylomorphic tradition from Aristotle to Aquinas and beyond is marked by a series of complex debates on the soul, seeing variously – or simultaneously – as a set of potentiae and as "the actual formal principle making embodied living substances to be the kinds of things that they are."[49]

In contemporary thinking, the focus is less on houses, oak trees, or even individual humans and more on political form and political power. Antonio Negri, for one, has attempted to separate *constituent power* as the perpetual potential of human creative force from actualized *constituted power*; when it becomes formalized and detached from its popular (multitudinous) base, the latter becomes *sovereign power*. Negri and many in his wake pit "Spinozist constituent power *potentia* against Hobbesian constituted power *potestas*."[50] Whereas much early modern philosophy tried to shed scholasticism as so much dead weight, Hobbes and Spinoza each *detourned* the notion of potentiality rather than jettisoning it altogether – politicizing potentiality as a form of power. Matters are more complicated than a clear-cut opposition between Spinozian multitudinous potentiality and Hobbesian sovereign potency, between amorphous social matter and institutionalized

form. In his work, Hobbes himself articulated a dialectic of *potentia* and *potestas*– even while indeed privileging the latter.

In keeping with medieval thought on the problem of the King's Two Bodies – i.e., on institutions as being separate from the people that embody them – Hobbes focused on the "body politic" as an artificial entity that could be analyzed as analogous to scholasticism's theorization of natural entities in which "the proper power of an entity should generate behavior" along predictable lines, without the whims of free will.[51] Hobbes thus based his theory of human institutions and sovereignty on scholastic *natural* philosophy, at least in early work such as *De Cive* (1642*).* While Hobbes's hostility to the inchoate multitude and his championing of law and order were constants in this thinking, he would abandon the juridical naturalization of constituted sovereign power that marked his early work. *Leviathan* (1651) proposes what Sandra Leonie Field terms a *relational* rather than an essential or natural conception of power.[52] In *Leviathan,* Hobbes theorizes a variety of artificial personas and forms of *personation*, in which power is delegated to some agent. He does not deem sovereignty to be fundamentally different from this, as the sovereign's power is also supposed to be the result of some – hypothetical – agreement by the people to delegate their potentia, transmuting it into the ruler's potestas.[53]

Hobbes's conceptualization of sovereignty has an incisiveness that makes it more than mere ideology. It is possible to think critically with Hobbes – or indeed to work critically with Abraham Bosse's famous frontispiece for *Leviathan.* In his video *Not Sinking, Swarming* (2021), artist Oliver Ressler shows footage of activists preparing a climate protest so as to "offer a real insight into the processes of climate movements' self-organization." Ressler hides the organizers' identities, either by filling in their outlines with images of the subsequent protest, or through pixelation. At one point, a pan of Bosse's image of the Leviathan (with the sovereign's body politic being constituted by, or subsuming, the mass of the people) fills the screen, with a text on assemblies and swarms

of disobedient bodies as constituting a counter-power to past, present, and future Leviathans.

The image of Leviathan's crowned head fades into Ressler's pixelated multitude. Hobbes dissolves into Spinoza, or into Spinoza as read by Negri. If Spinoza introduced the multitude as composed of pluriform *potentiae*, Negri identified the multitude with the proletariat, though this proleteriat is not necessarily the industrial working class.[54] There is, to be sure, a tension between what Negri and Hardt term an ontological multitude, *sub specie aeternitatis*, and a historical or not-yet multitude that needs to be organized as a political project. However, these two multitudes, "although conceptually distinct, are not really separable. If the multitude were not already latent and implicit in our social being, we could not even imagine it as a political project; and, similarly, we can only hope to realize it today because it already exists as a real potential."[55] Actualizing this potential would indeed mean that – as Rodrigo Nunes glosses this passage – people become "conscious of its latency," which requires a political project.[56] Thus, the multitude's incarnation could indeed be coalitions of climate action groups, as in Ressler's video.

Potential History, Historical Potential

While the early modern politicization of *potentia* as a form of power thus resonates strongly in contemporary thinking, a second moment also needs to be addressed. In the transition from German Idealism to Materialism, certain philosophers and political radicals sought to side with *potential history*, with history

as becoming, and as repository of un-actualized possibility and potentiality.[57] Key here is Friedrich Schelling, who in his later work latched on to the Aristotelian temporalization of ontology in his attempts to counter Hegelianism by ontologizing Hegel's dialectics. Schelling critiqued Hegelian dialectics for remaining merely logical; insofar as there was any congruence between this philosophy and reality, this was merely accidental. Strictly speaking – so Schelling avers – *being* was unnecessary for Hegel. All that mattered was thought.[58] By contrast, Schelling obsessively attacked the problem of being, that which precedes any philosophy. In doing so, he historicized the ontological. This resonated at a moment marked by the decline of idealism and its transformation into early materialist philosophies of praxis, and it became again relevant in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, when the poverty of orthodox Marxian dialectics – especially as codified in the Kojèvian reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic – was increasingly apparent.

When he was appointed as Hegel's successor in Berlin in 1841, Schelling's much-anticipated lectures became a PR disaster. This was the moment when Left Hegelians such as Engels turned against him. However, up to that point there had been a careful rapprochement between Schelling and Left Hegelians such as Ruge and Cieszkowski, and a sense of shared philosophical interests and "objective convergences" irrespective of ideological differences.[59] Schelling and the Young Hegelians both sought an *Aufhebung* of Hegelianism, from the right and from the left, and both wanted to "put Hegel on his feet" by foregrounding the *außerlogische Wirklichkeit*, the *wirkliche Welt*, the *Tat* and *Praxis*. In his 1838 *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*, Cieszkowski sought to create a post-Hegelian philosophy of praxis, of the act, whose echoes can be traced from Marx to Debord.

"Late" Schelling differentiated between what he termed negative and positive philosophy. Negative philosophy is logical, rational; this is what Hegel's dialectic remained limited to, in Schelling's diagnosis. Positive philosophy (which has nothing to

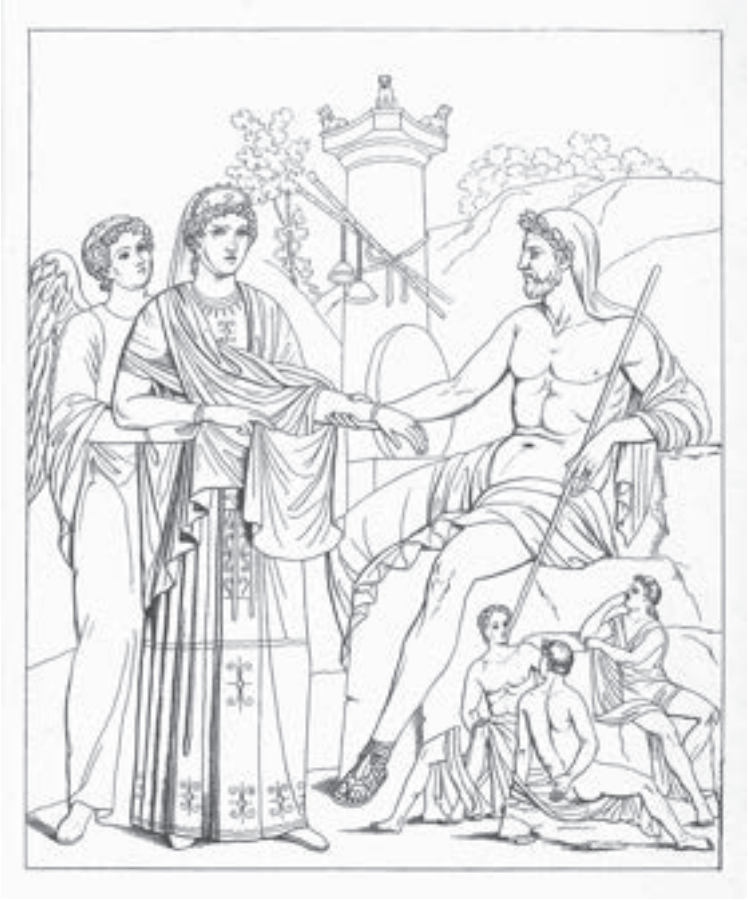
do with positivism whatsoever) concerns actual being, that which precedes and exceeds logical thought. As Peter Dews notes, in the transitional *Weltalter* Schelling used the terms *logical* and *historical* philosophy for what he later termed *negative* and *positive* – though the entire system, as constituted by these dialectical counterparts, is itself profoundly historical in nature.[60] Here, I obviously cannot claim to do justice to the rather ramshackle system that Schelling develops through a maddening series of iterations and variations.[61] In the spirit of low theory, I will merely offer a bowdlerized summary that offers some pointers as to its anachronistic relevance.

Historicizing Aristotle's *dunamis* and *energeia,* Schelling charts the dialectic of potentiality and actuality in the registers of both negative and positive philosophy. In the mode of negative philosophy, the dialectic starts with pure potentiality, being-able-to (*Seinkönnen*); the next steps involve that potentiality's actualization into a kind of inchoate and generic being (*Sein*); this must in turn be re-potentialized, infused with freedom and form. In the register of positive philosophy, the starting point is not pure potentiality but rather what Schelling calls *unvordenkliches Sein*, an "unprethinkable" and undifferentiated *being*.[62] This is precisely what was lacking in Hegel: Hegel started with the idea, and even its dialectic self-alienation in nature remained a mere philosophical concept. The question for positive philosophy is how this aboriginal being can become *becoming*. How to infuse being with potentiality, which is to say with freedom, historicity, futurity?[63] When the possibility of being other, of being otherwise, reveals itself within immemorial being, it raises itself to the status of *potentia potentiae* – a potential potency that does not yet pass into actuality.[64]

Once this actualization finally happens, we are dealing with the first proper potency in Schelling's triad: *Das Seinkönnende*, which was the starting point in the merely logical realm of negative dialectics, but here reveals itself as a differentiation from inchoate *Ursein*. The second potentiality, also called the *Seinmüssende*, that which cannot help but be, infuses direction and purpose into the potentially equally random and boundless creation that is the

Ursein; the third potency, the *Seinsollende,* or *selbstbewusstes Können,* is a potentiality to be that never spends itself fully in being, that always maintains an essential freedom in and from being.[65] This is Spirit: a re-potentialization of being, a reopening of creation. In a Christian register, these three potencies become the personalities of the Trinity: The Father who creates the world by positing a being distinct from Himself, by self-othering (*"Gott ist das Andere");* the Son who reinjects divine Logos into a fallen world; and Spirit as free subjectivity in a transformed (transfigured) creation.[66] However, it is first in pagan mythologies that the potentialities manifested itself in the human mind. This shows how far removed Schelling's positive philosophy is from positivism: much of it is dedicated to a philosophy of mythology that treats myths as historical realities. Of course, Schelling does not assume that these gods really existed in the world – but they did exist *in the human mind,* which where a theogonic process unfolded in mythical guise.

A tour the force of Schelling's reading of myths is his interpretation of a Pompeiian fresco in an 1833 lecture. While it is now thought to depict the marriage of Zeus/Jupiter and Hera/Juno, for Schelling it represented Kronos and Rhea and their three male children (with Zeus being on the right). Schelling reads the killing of Kronos and the Giants as the "last crisis in the world of the Greek gods."[67] Like Uranos before him, Kronos sows the seeds of his own destruction by procreating; he is a "blind seyender Gott" who cannot see into the future. Zeus, who will be his undoing, represents spiritualization: "Zeus is nothing other than Kronos turned entirely towards reason."[68] On the fresco, the futures Schelling interprets as Zeus and his siblings are represented as much smaller than the main figures; this is because they represent the as yet hidden, potential future. This idealist take on the gigantomachy could hardly be more different from Peter Weiss's materialists reading. As the "missed encounter" between Schelling and the Left Hegelians suggests, his *Philosophy of Revelation* and *Philosophy of Mythology* constitute a compromised and partial historicization of Aristotle that remains trapped in Christian salvation history.



One of Schelling's more dedicated listeners in Berlin was himself a tormented Christian, and a thinker not so much of revolutionary action as of anxiety. This listener was Kierkegaard, whose notes on Schelling's January 17, 1842 lecture state that "The substance of this process is the creation of a world in which all possibilities are actualities. The real God is the Creator."[69] While Kierkegaard would repeatedly reference Schelling in his work, his focus is on psychology and ethics – on the human individual in a fallen world facing the uncertainty of conflicting or precarious possibilities. His focus is not God the Creator but on His creature,

Adam, and on all subsequent individuals, who have forever been reenacting Adam's original sin, which itself came out of the choice between obeying or disobeying God. For all of us perpetually reenacting Adam, the "selfish infinity of possibility" generates anxiety, but also offers something greater than sensuous pleasure itself: "My soul has lost possibility. If I were to wish for something, I would wish not for wealth or power but for the passion of possibility, for the eye, eternally young, eternally ardent, that sees possibility everywhere. Pleasure disappoints; possibility does not."[70]

In contemporary thought, an affirmative version of Kierkegaard's focus on the affective dimension of possibility in an individual register, shorn of Protestant anguishing about sin, blends with the Negrian-Spinozist glorification of multitudinous constituent power. A case in point is the Argentine Colectivo Situaciones's concept of *potentia*, which has been developed in the context of the Argentine protests of 2001, and later in the South American protests against femicide and gendered violence. This *potentia* is a multitudinous "power to," while *poder* is Colectivo Situaciones' version of potestas, "power over."[71] Instead of associating potentia with constituent or instituent power, Colectivo Situaciones propose their notion of de-institution, undoing "previous political representations" so as "to affirm a non-representational becoming." Colectivo Situaciones insists that one should not get bogged down in theoretical niceties and exegetic virtuosity: "All of them must go" [the slogan of the December 19th and 20th protests in 2001] does not need interpreters to read what the text suggests, but practices that navigate what this statement lays open.[72]

In Europe, Agamben appropriated and re-aristotelianized the concept of de-instituent power, merging it with the Schellingian potentiality to not-be in his writings on destituent power and inoperativity. Contra Negri, he conceives of sovereign power as "[dividing] itself into constituting and constituted power," and insists that the relation between these two is "just as complicated as the relation Aristotle establishes between potentiality and act, *dynamis* and *energeia*; and, in the last analysis, the relation

between constituting and constituted power (perhaps like every authentic understanding of the problem of sovereignty) depends on how one thinks the existence and autonomy of potentiality."[73] The privileging of *potentia* – in the form of constituent, instituent or de-instituent power – over *potestas* is a main feature of Agamben's potentialism. Following Bartleby's refrain of "preferring not to," Agamben foregrounds the power to not-be (like that). Since actualization means running the risk of slipping into actualized *potestas,* he advocates a new "ontology of potentiality" that replaces "the ontology founded on the primacy of actuality," Agamben insists on the need to explore forms of *destituent* power that resist being captured and constituted.[74]

In his siding with the power to *not-be*, the refusal to actualize, Agamben can also draw on Schelling. Schellingian potentiality is *power over possibility;* as such it is a form of sovereignty, perhaps the highest form. As opposed to constituted and enshrined *potestas,* it is the power to become, which means: to be *other* than what already exists. This is how potentiality first manifests itself in aboriginal being. It introduces a difference.[75] Yet, Schelling is not an unqualified productivist of potentiality. As Agamben argues, his proposal to think an immemorial being "that presupposes no potentiality" is a rare attempt "to conceive of being beyond the principle of sovereignty."[76] To be sure, within Schelling's system this state must be overcome; things need to start happening. Nonetheless, he is reluctant to argue that potencies must always pass into actuality, and spends many pages discussing potentialities that refuse to budge. Potentiality as highest form of sovereignty is constituting and instituting as well as destituent. Thus Agamben, taking cues from Schelling, can rightly emphasize "the potentiality to not-be," which "can never consist of a simple transition *de potentia ad actum*: It is, in other words, a potentiality that has as its object potentiality itself, a *potentia potentiae*."[77]

The "ontological turn" in leftist theory has been a mixed blessing. Often resulting in grand debates between the "line of immanence" (Deleuze, Hardt and Negri, Agamben) and the "line of

transcendence" (Laclau, Mouffe, Badiou, Zizek), these debates are both self-perpetuating and unresolvable as both sides over-eagerly map ontologies that "both fundamental *and* contestable" onto questions of political organization and action.[78] Agamben is not the least problematic in this regard. The halting and compromised historicization of ontology in Schelling is mirrored by an all too coherent ontologization of the historical in Agamben; a lack of mediation between the ontological and the political leads to increasingly dubious interventions in political debate, as when measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID were seen exclusively through the prism of sovereignty and the state of exception, without any allowance for the contingencies and dialectical complexities of history.

Deleuze's version of Schellingian potentialism offers a productive alternative here. At times, he uses potentiality and virtuality as synonyms, yet he is concerned by conceptions of potentiality that confuse it with mere possibility: "The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realisation.' By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualisation."[79] This is not mere semantics, Deleuze insists: The point is that the actual does not *resemble* the virtual. Rather, actual forms emerge in a process of differentiation that can produce the unprecedented:

> to the extent that the possible is open to "realization," it is understood as an image of the real, while the real is supposed to resemble the possible. That is why it is difficult to understand what existence adds to the concept when all it does is double like with like. Such is the defect of the possible: a defect which serves to condemn it as produced after the fact, as retroactively fabricated in the image of what resembles it. The actualisation of the virtual, on the contrary, always takes place by difference, divergence or differenciation. Actualisation breaks with resemblance as a process no less than it does with identity as a principle.[80]

There are shades here of Gilbert Simondon's critique of hylomophism, and especially of those versions in which "form is an a priori UFO that lands on raw matter."[81] Such versions of Aristotelian hylomorphism might be said to be covertly Platonic; the morphe here functions like a preexisting idea. Deleuze's virtuality against all philosophies of pre-existing forms, including modern conceptions of heredity, just as it opposes the reduction of the potential to the possible. This is not to say that Deleuze's virtual constitutes a conceptual break. Rather, it is an attempt to salvage potentiality from its degraded versions – as is apparent, for instance, from his appreciative remarks on Schelling, whose succession of potencies "brings difference out of the night of the Identical," through a "play of pure depotentialisation and potentiality, testifying to the presence in Schelling's philosophy of a differential calculus adequate to the dialectic."[82]

If potentiality and actuality both partake in the real, the question is *how to practice actualization* (a practice that may also entail refusals to actualize, moments or long periods of preferring-not-to). As suggested by Hardt and Negri, a version of Jameson's historical consciousness is key, and this involves the action of *naming*: Naming the multitude as a concept and a potential political reality is a speech act that may help to actualize it.[83] Performance trumps ontology, and immanence becomes immanent critical practice – a project that will generate contradictory and imperfect forms, divergent forms of identification and transindividuation, collaboration, and collectivity.

Probability and Energy

I have sketched certain genealogies in ways that are no doubt both too simplified and too unsystematic, but I consider a stock-taking of these arcane philosophies of great importance even – especially – in the accelerating catastrophe.[84] The politicization of Aristotelianism in early modern thought, its historicization in nineteenth-century (post-)idealism, and the affective turn announced

by Kierkegaard all intermingle in sometimes contradictory ways in current thought. One crucial question remains that of the specific forms through which power over possibility can be asserted. Is the theory and practice of potentia as (de-)instituent power from below not all too often stuck in an abstract opposition between the horizontal and the vertical, and hampered by an association of structure or form with constituted potestas?

The chronopolitical and organizational implications of contemporary potentialism are ambivalent, particularly in a context marked by forms of algorithmic management that seek to make potential history contiguous with the present through predictive probabilism – the project of the aforementioned "longermist" think-tank theory. This is the context for Sean Cubitt's diagnosis that "potential as the presence of futurity is annihilated" in a world that no longer "distinguishes between real and probabilistic."[85] With the proliferation of "prediction products" based on data extraction, future (consumer) behaviors can become transparent. By processing vast quantities of data, algorithms can detect patterns; a classic example in the relevant literature is "vegetarians miss fewer flights." It is no longer merely a matter of extrapolating on the basis of past data, but of real-time data mining and pattern recognition allowing for instant feedback. Thus "a handful of now measurable personal characteristics, including the 'need for love,' predicting the likelihood of 'liking a brand'" – or voting for a party.[86] Algorithmic culture is thus based on a probabilistic logic. On the macro level, forms of social emergence become probabilistic trend forecasting within the *Katastrophenmanagement* that is contemporary governance. If the climate is such a complex system that weather emergencies such as extreme heatwaves are hard to predict in detail, it is well-known that "the danger of feedback loops" increases the likelihood of such "unexpected events" – so how unexpected are they, really?[87]

Louise Amoore has argued that attempts to predict exceptional, "low probability, high consequence events" such as terrorist attacks or pandemics reveal the limitations of a statistical

and probabilistic approach. Nonetheless, this had not led to an abandonment of probabilism in the face of such events; or rather, probabilism was recast as a somewhat more sketchy possibilism. After 9/11, an entire industry emerged that blending data mining with the strategic exercises of scenario planning in order to come to grips with the possibilistic logic of unlikely but disastrous events.[88] *Atlantic Storm* was a 2005 simulation of a bioterrorist attack that "demonstrated the weakness of international public health and security systems when dealing with a sudden outbreak of highly infectious diseases," with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright playing the role of US President.[89] Minus the bioterrorism element, there has been no shortage of warning voices concerning the potential for highly contagious zoonotic diseases – after the outbreak of COVID-19, media outlets listed people who "seemingly predicted the coronavirus pandemic" – from Bill Gates to Nostradamus.[90] In the context of disaster capitalism, worst-case scenarios are possibilities that will probably come true sooner or later. It's no surprise that dystopian sci-fi shows such as *Black Mirror* have managed to "predict" so many things: prediction has never been easier.

The concept of "emergent properties" has served to mythologize the probabilistic economy. In 1994, one of the cheerleaders of the new economy, *Wired*'s Kevin Kelly, published *Out of Control* – a book that jumpstarted the Silicon Valley-affiliated "hype surrounding emergent behavior," in which notions such as the "hive mind" and "swarm intelligence" were applied to networked human (or human-machinic) behavior.[91] Kelly based himself on William Morton Wheeler's 1911 essay "The Ant Colony as an Organism," in which he analyzed the ant colony as an organism in its own right. "Wheeler said the superorganism of the hive 'emerges' from the mass of ordinary insect organisms. And he meant emergence as science – a technical, rational explanation – not mysticism or alchemy."[92] In biological theory, the concept of emergence countered vitalist notions such as the *élan vital*.[93] Form came to the fore precisely because as an emergent property, as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, life *is* form: "From an organismic perspective, the central and unavoidable focus of biology is form. […] Form is more than shape, more than static position of components in a whole. For biology the problem of form implies a study of genesis."[94]

The study of origins quickly gets contentious. As Andreas Malm has argued, acknowledging the emergent properties of aggregates does not absolve one from trying to analyze the various factors. The fact that the climate is a complex system with emergent properties does not mean that human, state or corporate actors have no responsibilty. However, for all the debates that are still raging between reductionists and emergentists, "there is one sphere into which [reductionism] seems unable to make any inroads: that of society. Properties of society cannot be derived from the atomistic aggregation of its members."[95] Again, however, this does not let anyone off the hook when it comes to the question of how to live together, how to organize society. In Jussi Parikka's words, "Being connected in networks or in swarms does not imply an emergence of political formation with common goals, and hence addressing swarms as democratic tools in an overly

straightforward way should be avoided."[96] In this respect, a certain discourse on emergence has done much to muddy the waters – as when activist and author Adrienne Maree Brown develops a brand of "emergent strategy" counselling that amounts to a heady mix of a scientific soundbites on emergence and a reading of Octavia Butler's science-fiction.[97]

When authors such as Cubitt express concern over the "affective storms" that emerge on social media, this should not be seen as a new iteration of Gustave Le Bon's conservative nineteenth-century account of the "unruly crowd," pictured as dangerous – a potential mob.[98] Jodi Dean has noted that what gets called a crowd in "crowd intelligence" may be more properly referred to as a data pool.[99] Here, we are not so much in the realm of Le Bon as in that of Cournot, who introduced probability into economic analysis. Cournot argued that society keeps getting more organized and therefore more predictable, until it operates "like a beehive, a virtually geometric pattern."[100] An offline but networked mass event – whether it is a spectacle at Tate Modern or the storming of the Capitol – still generates plenty of dirty data for outreach management and fundraising. The discourse about emergent properties often obscures that the actualization of a human swarm at a networked event happens *by design,* and that it is facilitated by the design features of social-media platforms. What do those "disruptive technologies" enable, and what do they make difficult, or sabotage? Marx's dictum that "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax" can serve as a reminder that, as incredible as beehives and termite hills are, human organizational form has greater instability and plasticity, is riven by antagonisms, and should come with options.[101] Perhaps the real drama is the seeming lack of options, or the reduction of *potential forms and histories* to a limited set of *abstract possibilities,* which are then transcoded into *statistical probabilities* – though, as with *Atlantic Storm,* certain possibilities with low probability can come to command much attention and massive resources.

A book by a prominent "long-termist" is a case in point. In *What We Owe the Future,* William, MacAskill first paints a grand vista of the "potential future of civilization," which far outruns that of "the average mammalian species," due to human reason and technological prowess; "The earth will remain habitable for hundreds of millions of years. If we survive that long, with the same population per century as now, there will be a million future people for every person alive today. And if humanity ultimately takes to the stars, the timescales become literally astronomical" – something which the author illustrates with rows of Otto Neurath-style figures representing future generations.[102] The potential is vast, but so are the risks – of AI or bioterrorism snuffing out humankind. One particularly hallucinatory passage is worth quoting in full:

> Many extinction risk specialists consider engineered pandemics the second most likely cause of our demise this century, just behind artificial intelligence. At the time of writing, the community forecasting platform Metaculus puts the probability of an engineered pandemic killing at least 95 percent of people by 2100 at 0.6 percent. Experts I know typically put the probability of an extinction-level engineered pandemic this century at around 1 percent; in his book The Precipice, my colleague Toby Ord puts the probability at 3 percent. Even if you dispute the precise numbers, I think that in no way can we rule out such a possibility. And even if the probability is low, it is still high enough that preventing such a catastrophe should be a key priority of our time.[103]

In this vision of coming Atlantic Storms, the juggling of possibilities and probabilities on the basis of phenomenally sketchy sources is used to justify what seems to be a foregone conclusion.[104] Artificial Intelligence is key for MacAskill's visions of "[…] economies [that] could double in size over months or years rather

than decades," though how that would work on a finite planet, before space colonization, is anyone's guess. MacAskill is particularly slippery when it comes to climate change, doing his best to put a techno-optimistic, greenwashing spin on things. "Decarbonisation is a proof of concept for long-termism. Clean energy innovation is so robustly good, and there is so much still to do in that area that I see it as a baseline long-termist activity against which other potential actions can be compared."[105] However, taking it as a given that decarbonization is going well, MacAskill emphasizes that "moral change, wisely governing the ascent of artificial intelligence, preventing engineered pandemics, and averting technological stagnation are all at least as important, and often radically more neglected."[106]

These days, MacAskillian slogans greet us from billboards and ads: potentialist propaganda. The platform EY.ai exhorts its possible corporate clients to "Build confidence in AI," "Create exponential value," and "Augment people potential."[107] The message is clear: the undead labor of AI will potentialize that of the remaining human knowledge-workers. Meanwhile, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam strikes a similar tone in a campaign using the slogans "Unlock Your Potential" and "Unlock Our Potential," with posters containing a variety of hybrid human-nonhuman faces. One poster for the VU's School of Business and Economics shows a face that has planet Earth mapped onto it, becoming the Blue Marble, while another one shows a circuit board in which one can recognize facial factures. The first one calls on us to unlock our potential in the name of "a sustainable vision," while the second one is about "futureproof digitalisation." Other designs go for faces bursting into a kind of cubist cornucopia of images, usually containing both plants and robots. Somehow, unlocking our potential will mean clean energy and wealth on a finite planet, though the telling expression "future-proof" suggests that the future may be a Hobbesian fight of all against all, with those who have the right education and tech having the advantage.

Like some apprentice scenario planner, MacAskill does briefly consider the "low-probability but worst-case climate scenario," but fails to see how "even this could lead directly to civilizational collapse." The *real* risk is the depletion of fossil fuel in this century, as in that case "we would use up a resource that might be crucial for recovery after the collapse of civilization" (due to nuclear war or bioterrorism, rather than climate change).[108] In the subtext of *What We Owe the Future,* then, we find a different conception of potentiality: the potential (fossil) energy needed to fuel the process of accelerating economic innovation. Andreas Malm's study of the adoption of the steam engine and the emergence of "fossil capital" in Britain around 1800 teems with references to the "potential energy" contained in water power and coal. This is potential energy in terms of horsepower. How much quantifiable horsepower does the heat of combustion of a certain amount of coal generate? Any comparison is ultimately complex, and involves social and political factors.[109] These days, the hidden ecological costs are increasingly coming to the surface: Whether wind power is more expensive than coal, oil or

gas also depends on whether the ecological consequences are factored into the equation.

What the likes of MacAskill will not admit is that the catastrophe is already here. How's that for predictability? We are in the storm, perhaps trying – as suggested by Aimé Césaire in a passage glossed by Malcolm Ferdinand – to get to its center, to the eye of the hurricane.[110] We are immanent to the catastrophe and cannot dialectically magic our way out of it in one fell swoop. In this situation, and in the face of the longtermists' lavishly funded ideological dross, we need to develop a potential politics, or politics of potentiality. Such a project refuses to limit human and social potential to the mathematical sublime of vast sums of future human lives. and tries to reassert power over possibility. This would indeed amount to a *potentialism against probabality*, as T.J. Demos suggests: "it's against probability that we must now act, for a future of disruption, and for the emergence of the possible beyond the emergency of the present."[111] Here, a slogan from a 1908 publication which has been excavated by the team of Hägerstensåsens Medborgarhus – a social and cultural center in Stockholm – and knitted into scarves designed by Evelina Mohei, is rather to the point: "Everything that is necessary is possible." Another phrase form the Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs* (1986) was recently quoted by Natascha Sadr Haghighian: "In time, we will demand the impossible in order to wrest it from that which is possible."[112]

As suggestive and inspiring as such slogans may be, the question is obviously how they can become truly performative speech acts rather than impotent incantations. They need to be complemented by hard questions. Are there ways of intervening actively in processes of emergence – in forming them? What of truly different forms and relationships – emancipatory and redistributive forms and relationships? Oliver Ressler's use of *swarming* in the title of his video evokes the Silicon Valley discourse on swarm intelligence and hive minds, on emergent behavior that can be modeled and predicted.[113] However, Ressler's multitude may yet

have surprises in store – swerves and feints that challenge the rule of probability.[114] Preserving potentiality and preventing it from slipping into constituted and actualized form has become such a preoccupation that the dialectic of potentiality and actuality, and of potential form and actual organization structure, has atrophied. Just how can potentialities beyond and against the merely probable be actualized? *How to organize potential political form into relations, organizations and coalitions* – which, from the vantage point of the present, appear as so many *improbable possibilities*?

Disidentificatory Organization

In the accelerating catastrophe, culture has become a crucial site of value extraction and wealth redistribution from bottom to top.[115] Its workers are structurally pitted against each other as creative entrepreneurial subjects. To invoke Bini Adamczak: Capitalist value connects people by separating and dividing them.[116] Within the parameters of neoliberal capitalism, the denizens of this new culture class were in indeed many ways agents of transformation; in the long wake of May '68, and in conjunction with autonomist, feminist, queer, and decolonial groups and networks, they

effected a "long cultural revolution" that would in turn trigger a backlash. Welcome to the culture wars, in which the emancipatory agenda of the late-1960s cultural revolution, with its critique of privilege, hierarchies and bourgeois conventions, serves as a bogeyman in the fight for hierarchy, and for practically neo-feudal forms of sovereignty over subaltern surplus populations.

As an educated class of "symbolic capitalists" appropriates the language of radical movements for purposes of distinction, hierarchies of grief are established under the cover of emancipatory politics.[117] Feminist and queer theorists who critique identity as constituted by acts of interpellation and performance are worshiped in the same art schools and art spaces where debates regularly end up in a hostile gridlock of aggressive offendedness and sulking defensiveness. Positionality can become an exercise in power play, and intersectionality can become a contest: I'm the most oppressed in the room, so I'm the only one with a right to speak. Discussions turn into bizarre show trials. Identity politics based on a critical understanding of situatedness and standpoints has morphed into an identitarianism that is profoundly shaped by neoliberal war of all against all; theory becomes preachy moralizing that is not about insight or social change in any substantial sense, but about ruthless social advancement under the ever-worsening conditions of late capitalism. Grotesque scenes proliferate. A blonde white European woman questions the right of another blonde white European woman to make work that engages critically with the legacies of European colonialism in Africa. A Black British academic, invited by an art school to respond to presentations by students, turns his feedback into a show trial of a disabled queer Chinese student for having *dared* to include Beyoncé footage in a video without explicitly reflecting on the centuries of violence inflicted on Black women. Artists and curators wage war on each other by playing various "cards" that would put them in the most subaltern position. Abuse of power comes as no surprise, and can come in many a guise. Examples could be multiplied, but let's not.[118]

Today's twitterfied antagonisms are a degraded repetition of the culture wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Some of their moments are worth revisiting in light of current conflicts. In 1990, a rift occurred between Douglas Crimp and the other editors of the journal *October*, who were less taken with Crimp's embrace of queer and AIDS activism. When a conflict erupted over the quality of certain papers, the editors questioned "the validity and efficacy of identity politics in their prescriptive and exclusionary modes, and warned against "a territorialization of discourse."[119] Crimp retorted: "When I say that I have become involved with identity politics, it is not without the full sense of what is problematic in those politics. To say, for example, 'As a gay man my experience of AIDS is different from yours' is not to say that I don't recognize that everything in that sentence is problematic. I know that gay is not an essential identity. I know that experience is constructed, mediated through representation, and so on. But to say that experience is thus problematic is not to say that experience as a category of thought can simply be dispensed with."[120]

Well-stablished by 1990, the notion of identity politics had come out the struggles of the 1970s, when "autonomous" social movements (i.e. movements not part of any Marxist party) had come to think in terms of a plurality of positions and struggles, even if those were not meant to be mutually exclusive. In 1977, the Black feminist Combahee River Collective stated that "the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us, and that [this] focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression."[121] Identity here is more a point of departure than an end in itself. Crimp's dialectical understanding of identity as both constructed and lived – as performed and felt – likewise comes with nuanced sense of positionality as necessitating and enabling specific forms of activism, rather than as fixed position. This isn't always so clearly the case in today's

neo-culture wars, in which identity and positionality are defined in ways that enable some, and disables others, to speak on certain subjects, and that regularly lead to callouts and to ritualistic displays of self-flagellation. How can destructive identitarianisms be countered without negating the fundamental insight articulated by the Combahee River Collective? How to foster and produce solidarity in uncommonality, and founding identity in politics, rather than politics in identity?[122] How to forge situated practices that allow for standpoints to be articulated and developed – as opposed to the profoundly neoliberal fixation on standpoints as property of individuals?

Today, the left often sides with forms whose historical actualizations largely seem to rob them of contemporary potential. Little Leninists, Trotskyists or Trontians harp on the Party form, secure in their ontological superiority and eager to exterminate all immanentists. Here, Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter's acerbic diagnosis of certain forms of theoretical posturing in the Anglosphere rings true: "We can trawl through the Marx–Bakunin–Lenin debates, even read them on repeat mode in the 'Jodi Dean' retro style that wants to make the American Communist Party Great Again, but there is no point in recuperating the worn-out organs of the party."[123] Much as I sympathize with Lovink's autonomism, however, I would go one step further and extend this critique to the equally worn-out forms that tend to be fetishized among certain "Negrists." It is certainly the great virtue of Negrian thought to have insisted on the primacy of popular agency, on the productivity of the multitude, yet insight can be complacent rhetoric, and the question what is to be done remains an echoing refrain.

The point is that *everything is broken* and that all forms have failed – in more or less glorious and productive ways.[124] No forms work a priori as readymade actualizations. This should not inspire pessimism or defeatism, nor should it be an excuse for uncritical eclecticism. What is needed, however, may be a dialectical eclecticism; a willingness to try out assemblages and concatenations that may be taboo to doctrinaire purists. Certain artistic-activist

practices are significant in this respect. Werker Collective blends leftist/communist and queer genealogies in its archive, and in the activations or actualizations of this archive, while Jonas Staal combines Jodi Dean's theory of the comrade with a Latourian critique of anthropocentrism; the setting of Staal and Radha D'Souza's Court for Intergeneration Climate Crimes includes images of extinct animals and plants as "comrades."[125]

For all the grotesque features of some of today's neo-Leninist theory, I do see a residual use-value in Dean's theory of the comrade than in most of today's versofied Party and Universalism screeds. In contrast to identitarian victimhood, Dean claims that "[the] term "comrade" points to a relation, a set of expectations for action. It doesn't name an identity; it highlights the sameness of those who share a politics, a common horizon of political action."[126] Also in opposition to the equally problematic liberal notion of the ally, Dean's insistence on working towards the "Comrade" is valid and valuable – particularly her insistence that "'Comrade' names a relation characterized by sameness, equality, and solidarity. For communists, this sameness, equality, and solidarity is utopian, cutting through the determinations of capitalist society."[127] There is, to be sure, a

utopian elision here of historical complexity in her account: In the Comintern of the 1920s and 1930s, Black activists were welcome as long as they adhered to Moscow's scripts, and the feminist agenda developed by Alexandra Kollontai and others was rolled back as comradeship was compromised by Leninist-Stalinist *Realpolitik.* This is not a disqualification of Dean's notion of the comrade, but it suggests the need for a disabused and pragmatic view of the specific forms of relinking, of re-relating, that comradeship produces.

Dean's neo-Leninism needs as its dialectical counterpart Adamczak's critical reading of the (masculinist) forms of subjectivity and relationality that were promoted and produced by the Bolsheviks during and after the October Revolution – a revolution which, as Adamczak argues in her account of the Storming of the Winter Palace, was little more than a Bolshevik coup designed to curtail the power of the workers' council as well as oust the Menshevik government.[128] Dean's conception of the comrade is neo-Leninist in its problematic suggestion that it is possible to *will* the accumulated and embodied weight of history out of existence with a single clean cut. For Adamczak, revolutions for are not single events but patient micropolitical practice. Becoming-comrade would thus be always work-in-progress – and progress is never assured. In 2019 as in 1968, 1917 or 1871, we need to work *with* and *on* the human wreckage that we are: the all too human mutants and monsters of actually existing capitalism. The old world made us and maimed us.

The feminist slogan "the personal is political" was meant as a challenge to entrenched divisions between the "female" private and domestic sphere and the "male" public sphere. By now, one may wonder whether "the personal" is not too often reified and fetishized, reduced to personality, and ultimately complicit with the quintessential liberal institution that is personhood. It's worth recalling David Halperin's insistence that "the cardinal principle of all oppositional cultural politics" is that "there is nothing personal – at least, that there is nothing exclusively personal – about subjectivity" – about subjectivity as subjectivation,

as transsubjectivation, as becoming-other?[129] If institutions colonize and shape our subjectivity, how can we remake ourselves by working together otherwise – and who is part of this "we"? How can the personal be socialized and decentered – rather than being fortified in the manner promoted by antisocial networks such as Facebook? How can the ethical can be politicized? *How to disidentify with imposed roles and entrenched habits?*[130] How we can make sure we see the personal as a point of departure for working through (infra)structural and systemic matters, rather than as a substitute for critical practice? *How to organize postpersonal processes of transsubjectivation beyond identitarianism?*

Conceptual and practical tools must be developed. One notion from the historical 1990s culture wars that can be helpful is José Estaban Muñoz's notion of disidentification, which he intended to be "descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship."[131] Muñoz builds on Michel Pêcheux's elaboration on Althusser's theory of ideological identification – also used by Judith Butler, whom Muñoz likewise references – in which disidentification is a mode in which the subject avoids both assimilation into the dominant order and a merely oppositional stance.[132] Taking pointers from queer performance artists of color, from Chicana theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, and theorists of intersectionality such as Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Muñoz arrives at an anti-identitarian version of identity politics. As a queer disconnect from the "majoritarian sphere," disidentification could be seen as a form of delinking, but it is an operation that does not lead to an epistemic break so much as it involves a constant performative critique of identity – and not just for queer or other minoritarian subjects:

> The fiction of identity is one that is accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects. Minoritarian subjects need to interface with different subcultural fields to advocate

> their own senses of self. This is not to say that majoritarian subjects have no recourse to disidentification or that their own formation of subjects is not structured through multiple and sometimes conflicting sites of identification.[133]

In today's parlance, one could think of Critical Whiteness as one such form of "majoritarian" disidentification, as well as critical individual and collective work on male gender identity. Such practices seek to transmute entrapment into potentiality, into futurity.[134] Becoming-comrade requires hard disidentificatory work; it cannot mean that it is always Marxist White Boys who decree that others fall short of the Universal while refusing to acknowledge that their loudly (pro)claimed universalism can come to function as the covert identitarianism of the educated male white cis subject – "rational man" as the hidden sovereign behind the emancipatory rhetoric.[135] The comrade-relation does not erase gender or race; it allows for a different way of relating, but it will remain all the more fragile the less willing the comrades are to acknowledge power differentials and discrepant backgrounds and biographies.

Here, the Caribbean critique of universalism is highly pertinent. In October 1956, after Krushchev's "revelations" on Stalin, Césaire wrote a letter to Maurize Thorez of the French Communist Party, in which he argued that the struggle of people of color against racism and colonialism had turned out to be of a different nature than the fight of French workers against capitalism, and that the former cannot be subsumed under the latter:

> This is not a desire to fight alone and a disdain for all alliances. It is a desire to distinguish between alliance and subordination, solidarity and resignation. […] I am not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the "universal." My conception of the universal

> is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars.[136]

Glossing this letter, Massimiliano Tomba notes that Césaire sought to "present an alternative vision of universalism that respects the particulars."[137] In the contemporary political imaginary, particularist identitarianism and abstract universalism are two sides of the same counterfeit coin.[138] Becoming-comrade should not be about substituting sameness for diversity, but about articulating and organizing difference on the basis of a shared understanding of emergency and catastrophe – and there needs to be a sense that ultimately, there is no shelter from the storm. To put this in plain English, we could do worse than invoke Fred Moten's delightful gloss on remarks by Fred Hampton of the Black Panthers:

> the problematic of coalition is that coalition isn't something that emerges so that you can come help me, a maneuver that always gets traced back to your own interests. The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?[139]

Trainings for the Capitalocene

If de Man mapped acceleration itself onto vast temporal expanse, deep time can be pitted tactically against the short-termism that propels acceleration. Jonas Staal's *Future Training Camp* in Turin (2022) took place in a space adorned with the slogan "We demand one million more years." The "we" is ambiguous: Apart from the fact that the third person plural may be considered a problematically universalizing invocation of "humankind," neither

the human participants of various stripes (humans having been around for perhaps 200.000 years) nor the ammonite fossils that adorned the space as "comrades in deep time" (ammonites having gone extinct some 66 million years ago) are strictly in a position to demand "one million more years."[140] For all its ambiguity, this slogan can be read as a provocative politicization of On Kawara's seminal conceptual art piece *One Million Years*, a chronological list of two million years in two parts: *One Million Years [Past]* and *One Million Years [Future]*, the former dedicated to "all those who have lived and died" and the latter to "the last one." Physically, the work takes the form of twenty volumes, each of which contains binders of page after page of consecutive dates. Since *Past* was conceived in 1969 and contains the years 998,031 B.C. through 1969 A.D., and *Future* dates from 1981 and comprises the years 1996 A.D. to 1,001,995 A.D, there is a curious gap between 1969 and 1996: A blank space that one could characterize as the piece's present, which happens to be coterminous with a period that marked the transition from the emancipatory upheavals of the late 1960s to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of neoliberalism.[141]

In his project *Monument to Capital,* Staal focuses on finance capital as materialized in successive "world's highest buildings," referencing the "skyscraper index" also invoked by Walid Raad in his *Les Louvres*. Rising in defiance of anything that would make social or ecological sense, these constructions seem to embody the autonomy of finance capital:

> The British multinational Barclays, which provides banking and financial services worldwide, annually publishes the Skyscraper Index. It was first developed in 1999 and according the Barclays it shows the "unhealthy correlation between construction of the next world's tallest building and an impending financial crisis: New York 1930; Chicago 1974; Kuala Lumpar 1997 and Dubai 2010."[142]

Monument to Capital exists in several versions, such as a small 2013 "study," which combines a photomontage in a lightbox with a digital animation that shows the line of the Dow Jones index unfolding across the screen, accompanied by the relevant skyscrapers. In a more elaborate 2017 installation, the animation almost becomes a footnote to a large three-dimensional version of the timeline dominating the space. In whichever form, the timeline shows a frighteningly linear history – but with cyclical elements of bust and boom, as each new peak in the "monument to capital" that can be formed by lining up these buildings is a symptom of crisis. For the moment, the monument peaks in the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, at least as far as actually built buildings are concerned: "The competition between countries to shape the expansion of the global Monument to Capital has in itself become completely speculative, in which new, higher designs are constantly announced without any one of them actually being built."[143] The shift into a virtual register of pure speculation is disconcerting, yet the realized buildings are of course also material indicators of spoliation and exploitation. In contrast to a Dow curve, these concrete abstractions can be linked fairly directly to ecological

folly, autocracy, and brutal working conditions. Staal proposes a desublimation of the global skyline by constructing the Monument to Capital in reverse:

> To force a turning point, I propose to build against growth: to start building downward. Step by step, from the Burj Khalifa on, we formalise the Monument to Capital and force history to a halt: a breakthrough out of history, against history:
>
> Next to the Burj Khalifa we build the Taipei 101.
> Next to Taipei 101 we build the Petronas Towers.
> Next to the Petronas Towers we build the Sears Tower.
> Next to the Sears Tower we build the World Trade Center.
> Next to the World Trade Center we build the Empire State Building.
> Next to the Empire State Building we build the Chrysler Building.
> Next to the Chrysler Building we build 40 Wall Street.
> Next to the 40 Wall Street we build the Woolworth Building.
> Next to the Woolworth Building we build the Metropolitan Life Building.
> Next to the Metropolitan Life Building we build the Singer Building.
> Next to the Singer Building we built Philadelphia City Hall.
> Next to Philadelphia City Hall we build the Park Row Building.
> Next to the Park Row Building we build the Milwaukee City Hall.
> Next to Milwaukee City Hall we build Manhattan Life Insurance Building.
> Next to Manhattan Life Insurance Building we build the New York World Building.
> Next to the New York World Building we build the Auditorium Building.

> Next to the Auditorium Building we build the Equitable Life Building.
>
> We complete the history commemorated by the current Monument to Capital by extending its history into the future.[144]

Reversing the timeline in this manner, countering its suggestion of accelerationist and possibly post-historical fate, is no fantasy of "turning back time" along the lines of deextinction plans. Rather, it is an opening-up of historicity, of becoming. Staal's reversal suggests instead that history *is* reversible – that time's arrow can be rewound. In literal terms this is absurd, but the proposal retracing steps along a linear path is clearly an invitation to recover alternatives never considered, timelines branching off into alternate histories, into real histories. "Actually existing history" is a nightmare from which we have yet to awake. It is a history of capitalist imperialism, colonial violence, cultural erasures and ecological destruction – and the Anthropocene, or Capitalocene, is its proud product. In the accelerating capitalocene, microfutures are complemented by various "long now" projections that seek to perpetuate that same short-termist society, somehow magically stabilizing and "civilizing" it, and by grim graphs that show the seeming impossibility of achieving this.

When it comes to rethinking timelines and reimagining history, singular artistic practices can have a relevance not usually acknowledged in political theory. In 2022, the "artificial entity" Transformella cinis, a performative persona who is described as "fed and cared for by artist Johannes Paul Raether," took a of people on a coach trip from a cultural center located in a former coal mine, PACT Zollverein in Essen, to an occupied village next to an active open-pit mine. Acting as a death doula, Transformella took the participants on a tour of "fossil infrastructures," inviting them to "remote sense the pressure in the tunnel where this black rock [a piece of coal] came from," and to imagine the years passing ("1000

years, one million years").[145] At one point, Transformella recited an "Invitation to die together" that centered on "an invitation to get rid of yourself as concept and term, as sign and subject, and start becoming process. animated by energy, undone by entropy."

Raether envisages the experience as transforming the participants "from an audience into a temporary community of metabolic drifters" (or *Stoffwechselwechsler*). These "negentropically accelerated and psychically lucid dreamers" would sense themselves in the expanded timeframe of evolutionary process as an expansive landscape of mutual aid and as a site of becoming an expanded metabolism." Such a hallucinatory road trip opens up onto what Tina M. Campt calls "the endlessly generative space of the counterintuitive."[146] It is in this space that we can and discuss the question of potentiality: What potential history or histories can be discerned and actualized in a present of ever-shrinking options? It is certainly imperative to stop thinking in terms of abstract "human lives" within a (neo)liberal framework, as represented for instance by MacAllister's grids of graphic figures. The focus of Raether's road trip was very much on disidentification with the "I-as-digger, I-as-accelerated, energized and crystallizing self-eater." Since "compulsive excavators cannot see, hear, feel cannot sense entropy," Transformella created a ritualistic parcours that

was precisely about *becoming-other together*, in an informal group marked by processes of de-and recomposition.

Beyond such training sessions and other forms of work with short-lived groups assembled for the occasion, recent activism has been very much about "[working] in self-organized collaborations, coalitions, alliances, and collectives," with all of these representing different scales and degrees of formalization.[147] If we think that giving up the party form altogether is inadvisable at this point, there is, as Lovink and Rossiter note, the option of "the party–movement hybrid, a party of parties, a federation of political entities, which was extensively discussed in the context of Syriza, Podemos, and DiEM25, each an initiative that came out of the 2011 uprisings."[148] If concatenations between residually Leninist and autonomist, anarchist, feminist and decolonial elements don't necessarily run smoothly, a politics of coalition and alliance relativizes the need for imposed consensus on lists of *Programmpunkte.* What such coalitions and alliances must pursue with all force is fundamental opposition to capitalocenic necropolitics and the probabilistic management of the intensifying catastrophe.

Such opposition cannot only take the form of protests and campaigns; it also needs to be practiced and organized as prefiguration, however compromised and flawed, of different forms of life. In a remarkable 1928 book, Otto Neurath mused on the possibilities and limitations of socialist *Lebensgestaltung,* of attempts to create new *Lebensformen* under capitalism. While clinging to a highly problematic theory of the unavoidable transformation of capitalist planning into a moneyless socialist planned economy, Neurath was nonetheless a keen and nuanced observer of the ways in which the practice of socialist activism was shaped by the existing conditions; building socialist organizations under capitalist conditions was obviously no easy charge. Even so, Neurath argues that proletarian organizations – especially youth organizations and forms of self-organized education – offered an anticipation of a "kommene Lebensstimmung."[149] While the *term* prefigurative practice (or prefigurative politics) only gained some

traction in the 1970s and 80s, and particularly in more recent years in post-Occupy anarchist and autonomist theory, the case of Neurath shows that the *idea* has a much longer history in the left.

In 1871, the Sonvilier Circular by the Bakuninist Jura Federation noted that future socialist society would be "the universalization of the organization with which the international will have endowed itself," and that therefore great care must be taken to structure this organization in a way that reflects emancipatory ideals. "How can we expect an egalitarian and free society to emerge from an authoritarian organization? Impossible."[150] Paul Raekstad argued that in the twentieth century, two interpretations of prefigurative practice emerged: One more narrowly strategic one, hewing closer to Marx, which posits that revolutionary organizations must develop the types of structures and decision-making that a future society can use and implement on a larger scale; the other interpretation, meanwhile, is broader and places more emphasis on human experience and culture, arguing that movements and organizations need to embody "those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience that are [its] ultimate goal."[151] While the distinction isn't always that clear-cut, Neurath would nonetheless appear to be an early exponent of the second version, which is the one that has come to the fore in artistic-activist circles in the last decade or so, and that has been eagerly adopted in certain politically minded artistic milieus. Such prefiguration has an aesthetic dimension, a trans-formative horizon. Sensing the catastrophe, the practitioners envisage life otherwise.[152]

Among the cultural disciplines, it was architecture that Neurath deemed of central importance, with the architect having the task to anticipate both technological and social developments in the near future, including "*Änderungen der Lebensformen*" (changes in the forms of life).[153] Such remarks are suggestive in the context of contemporary aesthetic practices that seek to common or decolonize the means of artistic and intellectual production, which can easily be chided for amounting to little else than a woke reshuffling of the deckchairs on the Titanic. However, Neurath's

use of the storied term *Lebensformen* – recently revived by authors like Agamben and Rahel Jaeggi – drives home the point that any crudely economistic relegation of culture to a merely superstructural epiphenomenon must be rejected.[154] Yes, the capitalist value-form informs and deforms many *Lebensformen* and social relations – but its reign is not homogeneous, its sovereignty not absolute. As Raymond Williams rightly insisted already in 1973:

> no mode of production, and therefore no dominant society or order of society, and therefore no dominant culture, in reality exhausts the full range of human practice, human energy, human intention."[155]

Endnotes

1 See Hendrik de Man, *Vermassung und Kulturverfall. Eine Diagnose unserer Zeit* (Bern: A. Francke, 1951), pp. 135-136.

2 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), preface, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique–pol–economy/preface.htm.

3 Antoine Augustin Cournot, *Traité de l'enchaînement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Hachette, 1861), p. 342. Quoted and discussed in Perry Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), pp. 300–301.

4 Arnold Gehlen and others fell for de Man's attribution of the term to Cournot; see Arnold Gehlen, *Studien zur Anthropologie und Soziologie* (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1963), p. 344. Lutz Niethammer discusses this genealogy in his *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?* (1989), trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 82–85.

5 Perry Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement*, p. 325.

6 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 146–147.

7 Fredric Jameson, *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*, ed. Slavoj Zizek (London and New York: Verso, 2016), p. 13.

8 Christophe Bouton, *L'accélération de l'histoire. Des Lumières à l'anthropocène* (Paris: Seuil, 2022), pp. 8–10. Bouton frequently references Koselleck's pioneering work on the trope of historical acceleration; see Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 150–202.

9 Bouton, *L'accélération de l'histoire*, p. 19. My translation.

10 Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987).

11 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009), p. 201. See also my "Unnatural History," originally published in the same year, in *History in Motion: Time in the Age of the Moving Image* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), pp. 255–300.

12 Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London/New York: Verso, 2016), p. 8.

13 Working Group on the 'Anthropocene,' "Results of Binding Vote by AWG. Released 21st May 2019," http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/

See also "Canadian lake chosen to represent start of Anthropocene," in *The Guardian*, July 11, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/11/nuclear-bomb-fallout-site-chosen-to-define-start-of-anthropocene

14 See T.J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), pp. 39–57.

15 Will Steffen, Wendy Broadgate, Lisa Deutsch, Owen Gaffney, and Cornelia Ludwig, "The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration," *The Anthropocene Review* 2, no. 1 (January 2015), pp. 81–98.

16 If a curve flattens out, like the one for marine fish capture, it is not necessarily a good sign: it does so not because of quota but because of overfishing.

17 Wiener's influential *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* was published in 1948.

18 Orit Halpern, *Beautiful Data: A History of Vision and Reason since 1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 44–45. The question to which extent the cybernetic paradigm was compatible with dialectics would preoccupy many during the 1960s and 70s: could cybernetic feedback be "dialecticized"? In any case, de Man would likely have regarded cybernetics as a doomed attempt to control what was now a nest of hornets rather than a beehive. One attempt to use cybernetic notions such as feedback in a materialist/Marxist manner is Harun Farocki and Hartmut Bitomski's film *Die Teilung aller Tage* (1970).

19 On the *Whole Earth Catalog* and Brand's overall trajectory, see Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, The Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and Diedrich Diederichsen and Anselm Franke (eds.), *The Whole Earth: California and the Disappearance of the Outside* (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt and Sternberg Press, 2013).

20 http://longnow.org/about/.

21 http://longnow.org/clock/.

22 https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/

The factors taken into consideration by the scientists setting the time not only include the potential for global nuclear war, but increasingly also climate change and the dangers of artificial intelligence. On the whole, then, this stuttering clock suggests that time is indeed running out, and that the best we can hope for is a reset of a few minutes, offering temporary respite.

23 See Brand, "The Dawn of De-extinction. Are Your Ready?" filmed February 2013, TED video, 18:17, https://www.ted.com/talks/stewart_brand_the_dawn_of_de_extinction_are_you_ready.

De-extinction has often been reported in the media with a focus on "bringing back dinosaurs," which caused me to mischaracterize Brand's de-extinction discourse in the past. In fact, Brand rightly insists that this is not viable due to lacking dinosaur DNA.

24 For Brand's dialogue with Musk, see Todd Woody, "Stewart Brand's Strange Trip: Whole Earth to Nuclear Power," *Yale Environment 360*, December 22, 2009, http://e360.yale.edu/features/stewart_brands_strange_trip_whole_earth_to_nuclear_power.

25 See Hillis's bio at http://longnow.org/people/board/danny0/.

26 Donald MacKenzie, "Is Economics Performative? Option Theory and the Construction of Derivatives Markets," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 28, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 29–55.

27 Brian Holmes, "Information's Metropolis: Chicago and the New Nature of Global Finance," in Beate Geissler and Oliver Sann, *Volatile Smile* (Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2014), p. 35.

28 Holmes, "Information's Metropolis," p. 35.

29 Nor is it accurate on large time scales, as Warren Buffett noted: "if the formula is applied to extended time periods […] it can produce absurd results." Warren Buffett, "Letter to the the Shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway Inc.," February 27, 2009, http://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2008ltr.pdf

30 Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William H. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, second edition (New York: Universe Books, 1974), p. 157.

31 Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth*, pp. 168–169

32 Leah Aronowsky, "Gas Guzzling Gaia, or: A Prehistory of Climate Change Denialism," in *Critical Inquiry* 47 (Winter 2021), p. 313.

33 See two brief histories written by (former) Shell employees: Pierre Wack, "Scenarios: Uncharted Waters Ahead," *Harvard Business Review* (September 1985): https://hbr.org/1985/09/scenarios-uncharted-waters-ahead; Angela Wilkinson and Roland Kupers, "Living in the Futures," *Harvard Business Review* (May 2013): https://hbr.org/2013/05/living-in-the-futures.

34 Peter Schwartz, *The Art of the Long View: Planning for an Uncertain world* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), p. 6.

35 Schwartz also co-founded the Global Business Network consultancy with Brand and others in 1987. See Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, pp. 181–184.

36 In early 2024, the university closed the Future of Humanity Institute, Nick Bostrom's longtermist think tank. See Nick Robins-Early, "Oxford shuts down institute run by Elon Musk-backed philosopher," in *The Guardian*, April 20, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/apr/19/oxford-future-of-humanity-institute-closes. William MacAskill is a key player in another Oxford institute, the Global Priorities Institute.

37 Alexander Zaitchick, "The Heavy Price of Longtermism," in *The New Republic*, October 24, 2022, https://newrepublic.com/article/168047/longtermism-future-humanity-william-macaskill

38 Nick Bostrom, "Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority," in *Global Policy* 4, no. 1 (February 2013), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1758-5899.12002

On Musk, see Quinn Slobodian, "Elon Musk Wants Us to Have More Children," in *The New Statesman*, July 29, 2024, https://www.newstatesman.com/ideas/2024/07/elon-musk-wants-us-have-more-children-demography-will-macaskill

39 Nick Bostrom, "Existential Risks FAQ" v. 1.2 (2013); Hilary Greaves and William MacAskill, *The Case for Strong Longtermism* (Global Priorities Institute Working Paper no. 5, June 2021), https://globalprioritiesinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Case-for-Strong-Longtermism-GPI-Working-Paper-June-2021-2-2.pdf

40 Nick Bostrom, "Astronomical Waste: The Opportunity Cost of Delayed Technological Development" (2003), quoted in Yannick Fritz, "Philosophy Against the Present: The Foundations and Critique of Longtermism," in *Umbau* no. 2 (n.d.), https://umbau.hfg-karlsruhe.de/posts/philosophy-against-the-present-the-foundations-and-critique-of-longtermism

41 Fritz, "Philosophy Against the Present."

42 "Der Historiker ist ein rückwärts gekehrter Prophet." Friedrich Schlegel, "Fragmente," in *Athenäum* I (1798), no. 1, p. 20.

43 Artistotle, *The Metaphysics,* trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London etc.: Penguin, 2004); for form and matter, see in particular book Zeta 6–9, pp. 185–199; for potentiality, in particular book Theta, pp. 253–282.

44 My wording here is inspired by Werner Heisenberg, *Physik und Philosophie* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1959), p. 137.

45 It should be noted, however, that Aristotle's terms have proven ambiguous, with *dunamis* having been interpreted variously as logical possibility and as capacity. Both Schelling and Agamben fall into the latter camp. See Kevin Attell, "Potentiality, Actuality, Constituent Power," in *Diacritics* 39, no. 3 (fall 2009), p. 39.

46 Sandra Leonie Field, *Potentia: Hobbes and Spinoza on Power and Popular Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 34. Field here quotes from Dennis Des Chene, *Physiologia: Natural Philosophy in Late Aristotelian and Cartesian Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 17.

47 Field, *Potentia*, p. 34.

48 Thomas Kjeller Johansen, *The Powers of Aristotle's Soul* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2012), p. 13.

49 Nicholas Kahm, "Aquinas and Aristotelians on Whether the Soul is a Group of Powers," in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 34 (2017), no. 2, p. 115.
50 Field, *Potentia*, p. 68.
51 Field, *Potentia*, p. 68.
52 Field, *Potentia*, pp. 80–91.
53 See, in particular, chapters 16–19 of *Leviathan.*
54 See Field, *Potentia,* pp. 159–163, for an analysis based on Negri's 1981 book *The Savage Anomaly*, on which the later collaboration with Hardt will build.
55 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London etc.: Penguin, 2005), pp. 212–222.
56 Rodrigo Nunes, *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal: A Theory of Political Organisation* (London/New York: Verso, 2021), p. 152.
57 *Potential History* is of course the title of Ariella Azoulay's magisterial study (London/New York: Verso 2019). While Azoulay drives home the importance of "unlearning imperialism" with great force, I have some issues with her notion of historical reversibility, as well as her unwillingness to consider that within the culture of Western imperialism, there may be forms of difference and dissensus worth taking seriously. This is not, however, the place for the kind of extensive discussion that Azoulay's work would deserve.
58 F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 127–135. The majority of this volume consists of the so–called Paulus-Nachschrift, a transcript of the lectures published (against Schelling's will) in 1843. An official version of Schelling's "positive philosophy," as manifested in the *Philosophie der Mythologie* and *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, would only be published posthumously by his sons.
59 Manfred Frank, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," in Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, p. 22.
60 Peter Dews, *Schelling's Late Philosophy in Confrontation with Hegel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 117.
61 When it comes to rambling complexity, the posthumous 1858 version of the *Philosophie der Offenbarung* is arguably worse than the pirated Paulus-Nachschrift, which I'm following here.
62 Dews, *Schelling's Late Philosophy in Confrontation with Hegel*, pp. 146–150; Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42,* pp. 154–164.
63 Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42,* p. 131.
64 Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, pp. 156–164.
65 Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42,* pp. 172–174.

66 Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, pp. 165–183, 194–196.

67 F.W.J. Schelling, "Ueber die Bedeutung eines der neu entdeckten Wandgemälde von Pompeji" (1833), in *Schellings Sämmtliche Werke* II.2, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1857), p. 675–685 (with the illustration is on p. 687). ed. Manfred Schröter, *Fünfter Ergänzungsband: Philosophie der Mythologie, 1842* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1943), pp. 541–553. This 1933 lecture was first published posthumously in the

68 In the original: „Zeus ist nichts anderes als der nun ganz zum Verstand umgewendete Kronos." Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, 1842,* p. 491.

69 "Der Inhalt des Prozesses ist die Hervorbringung von einer Welt, wo alle Möglichkeiten Wirklichkeiten seien. Der wirkliche Gott ist der, der Schöpfer ist." Kierkegaard's transcript of Schelling's lecture of January 17, 1842, in *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, p. 440 (my translation).

70 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), in *Kierkegaard's Writings,* VIII, eds. and trans. Rheidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 61; *Either/Or, Part I* (1843), in *Kierkegaard's Writings,* III, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 41. It should be noted that the quotation from Either/Or is from a text by "A," an aesthete, who is one of several alter egos between whom Kierkegaard stages a dialogue.

71 Nate Holdren and Sebastian Touza, "Translator's Preface," in Colectivo Situaciones, *19 & 20: Notes for a New Social Protagonism* (Wivenhoe/New York/Port Watson: minor compositions, n.d.), p. 6.

72 Colectivo Situaciones, *19 & 20*, p. 172.

More recently, Colectivo Situaciones member Verónica Gago has developed the notion of *feminist potentia* as "gesturing to an alternative theory of power." Gago argues that potentia is "not identical to the Aristotelian concept of 'potential,' and that feminist potentia should rather be seen as "desiring capacity": "This implies that desire is not the opposite of the possible, but rather the force that drives what is perceived as possible, collectively and in each body." Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything*, trans. Liz Mason-Deese (London/New York: Verso. 2020), p. 3.

73 Giorgio Agamben *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 44.

74 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 44. For his reading of Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener," see "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 243-271, and "Bartleby," in *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis/London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1993), pp. 35–37..

75 Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, p. 162

76 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 48.

77 Agamben, "Bartleby," pp. 35–36 While Georges Didi-Huberman has taken issue with the Debordian apocalyptic streak in Agamben's writings, Agamben diverges from Guy Debord's neo-Cieszkowskian actionism by focusing on *preferring not to*. See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Survival of the Fireflies*, trans. Lia Swope Mitchell (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), pp. 33–45.

78 Stephen K. White, "Affirmation and Weak Ontology in Political Theory: Some Rules and Doubts," in *Theory & Event* 4 (2000), no. 2, https://muse-jhu-edu.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/pub/1/article/909214

79 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1968; London: Continuum, 2001), p. 211. For a similar point (made in the context of linguistics), see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Vol. 2* (1980), trans. Brian Massumi (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 115, where "potential" and "virtual" appear to be used as synonyms.

80 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 212.

81 The quotation is from Yve-Alain Bois, "Whose Formalism?," in *The Art Bulletin* LXXVIII (March 1996), p. 11. For Simondon's critique of hylomorphism, see *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*, trans. Taylor Adkins (1964/89; Mineapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), pp. 21–54.

82 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 191. In the full quotation, Deleuze refers to the different potencies as identified by Schelling: A, A2 and A3.

83 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 220.

84 One obvious shortcoming of this genealogy is that I have not found a way to do justice to Ernst Bloch, an important early-twentieth century Schellingian Marxist, or Marxist Schellingian.

85 Sean Cubitt, "Mass Image, Anthropocene Image, Image Commons," in Tomáš Dvořák and Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Photography off the Scale: Technologies and Theories of the Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), p. 28.

86 Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (London: Profile Books, 2019), p. 277.

87 The quotations are from Helena Horton and Nina Lakhani, "Longer heatwaves driven by 'turbo-charged' climate change, say scientists," in *The Guardian,* July 17, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/17/longer-hotter-heatwaves-driven-turbo-charged-climate-change-scientists

88 Louisa Amoore, *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security Beyond Probability* (Durham/London: Duke University Press), pp. 8–10.

89 Daniel S. Hamilton and Bradley T. Smith, "Atlantic Storm" in *EMBO Reports* (2006), no. 7, https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.embor.7400606. For video documentation of the exercise, see https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/events-archive/2005_atlantic_storm/flash/index.htm

90 https://www.businessinsider.nl/people-who-seemingly-predicted-the-coronavirus-pandemic-2020-3?international=true&r=US

91 Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 51. In some ways, swarm intelligence denoted a new form of collectivism, rather than classic liberalism with its focus on the "free" individual, yet hierarchical planned economies such as China were seen as being ill-equipped for the new era. In March 2000, Bill Clinton sarcastically wished China's leaders "good luck" in trying to censor the internet. Oh, how we laughed!

92 Kevin Kelly, *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems, and the Economic World* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994), quoted from 2009 edition available at https://kk.org/books/other-editions-of-out-of-control/), pp. 11, 14.

93 See Donna Jean Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields: Metaphors of Organicism in Twentieth-Century Developmental Biology* (Yale University Press, 1976), p. 34

94 Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields*, p. 39.

95 Andreas Malm, *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (Verso, 2018), p. 69.

96 Parikka, *Insect Media,* p. 56.

97 Adrienne Maree Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chicago/London: AK Press, 2017).

98 Cubitt, "Mass Image, Anthropocene Image, Image Commons," p. 32.

99 Jodi Dean, *Crowds and Party* (London/New York: Verso, 2016), p. 11.

100 Antoine Augustin Cournot, *Traité de l'enchaînement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire*, Vol. 2 (Hachette, 1861), 342. Quoted and discussed in Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement*, pp. 300-301.

101 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One* (1867), trans. Ben Fowkes (London etc.: Penguin, 1999), p. 284. See also Malm, *The Progress of this Storm,* pp. 63–72.

102 William MacAskill, *What We Owe the Future* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), caption of figure *Figure* 1.2 in chapter 1. I have not been able to source a paginated version of the book online, and I have no interest in obtaining a copy of the print edition.

103 MacAskill, *What We Owe the Future,* chapter 5.

104 "In longtermism, these expected probabilities are used to feign objectivity, but in reality can be arbitrary or even informed by the person invoking them." Fritz, "Philosophy Against the Present."

105 MacAskill, *What We Owe the Future,* chapter 1.

106 MacAskill, *What We Owe the Future,* chapter 1.

107 At one point, an EY.ai ad promising "Confidence, value, potential popped up in a *Guardian* article in which a songwriter sounded the alarm over AI in music.

108 MacAskill, *What We Owe the Future,* chapter 6.

109 Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global* Warming (London/New York: Verso, 2016). As Malm emphasizes, coal was not necessarily cheaper than water power, but steam-powered factories in large urban centers gave the capitalists greater control over production and the workers. Malm's important study has serious blind spots, including his neglect of slavery and the plantation system, and his Leninist and statist orientation. "Leninist practice always relies on an ecology of struggles, but demands a strategic decision which radically suppresses it. Its line – take state power – is fiercely critical of, yet relies on a popular power it cannot bring into being, and that it does not respect, even as it mythologizes it. Again, the prioritization of agency-as-unified-will – be it a green Lenin or a climate Leviathan – obscures other forms of agency which are as essential to the abolition of fossil capital." Bue Rübner Hansen, "The Kaleidoscope and the Catastrophe: On the Clarities and Blind Spots of Andreas Malm," in *Viewpoint Magazine*, April 14, 2021, https://viewpointmag.com/2021/04/14/the-kaleidoscope-of-catastrophe-on-the-clarities-and-blind-spots-of-andreas-malm/

110 Malcolm Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale. Penser l'écolohgie depuis le monde caribéen* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), pp. 11, 43.

111 T.J. Demos, *Radical Futurisms: Ecologies of Collapse, Chronopolitics, and Justice-to-Come* (London: Sternberg Press, 2023), p. 88.

112 Natascha Sadr Haghighian, "What I Do Not Yet Recognize, Now at This Very Moment" (Berlin: Harun Farocki Institut, 2023), p. 16.

113 This also means it can be manipulated, as in fascist mobs springing into action thanks to AI-generated content distributed by bots. See Ben Quinn and Dan Milmo, "How TikTok bots and AI have powered a resurgence in UK far-right violence," in *The Guardian,* August 2, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/aug/02/how-tiktok-bots-and-ai-have-powered-a-resurgence-in-uk-far-right-violence

114 Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 51. In some ways, swarm intelligence denoted a new form of collectivism, rather than classic liberalism with its focus on the "free" individual, yet hierarchical planned economies such as China were seen as being ill-equipped for the new era. In March 2000, Bill Clinton sarcastically wished China's leaders "good luck" with trying to censor the internet. Oh, how we laughed!

115 See for instance Andrea Fraser, "Le 1%, C'est Moi," in *Texte zur Kunst* no. 83 (September 2011): 114–127; "There's no place like home," pp. 144–160.

116 Bini Adamczak, *Beziehungsweise Revolution. 1917, 1968 und kommende* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), p. 75.

117 See Musa al-Gharbi, *We Have Never Been Woke: The Cultural Contradictions of the New Elite* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024); see also Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics* (and Everything Else) (London: Pluto Press, 2022).

118 Positionality can also be weaponized by those in a lower hierarchical position: students attack a Spanish teacher who, speaking in English, inadvertently "misgenders" a student once, or on a Greek-Indonesian teacher who, being seen as white, has "no right" to make them read Fred Moten. These examples are drawn from my immediate *milieu.*

119 Statement by the editors of *October* on Douglas Crimp's departure, undated (1990). October Records, 1976-2001, 2002.M.9, Box 42, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. One typo has been corrected.

120 Douglas Crimp, letter to Rosalind Krauss, January 4, 1990. *October* Records, 1976-2001, 2002.M.9, Box 42, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Thanks to Noortje de Leij for making some of her research available to me.

121 Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement" (1977), https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf

122 The phrase "solidarity in uncommonality" is from Demos, *Radical Futurisms*, p. 24.

123 Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter, "Propositions on the Organizational Form," in Timon Beyes, Lisa Conrad, and Reinhold Martin, *Organize* (Lüneburg/Minneapolis: Meson Press/University of Minnesota Press, 2019), p. 91.

124 See also Nunes, *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal,* p. 214.

125 Seehttps://www.werkercollective.net/; https://www.jonasstaal.nl/projects/court-for-intergenerational-climate-crimes-cicc/.

126 Jodi Dean, "Four Theses on the Comrade," in e-flux journal no. 86 (November 2017), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/160585/four-theses-on-the-comrade/

127 Dean, "Four Theses on the Comrade." For a critique of the notion of the ally, see for instance Laurel Mei-Singh and Davianna Pōmaikaʻi McGregor, "To Be Done with Allyship: Towards Oceanic Justice in the Pacific," *The Funambulist*, no. 46 (March–April 2023)

128 Bini Adamczak, *Beziehungsweise Revolution. 1917, 1968 und kommende* (Berlin: Suhrkamp 2017).

129 David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 176.

130 José Estaban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

131 Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* p. 4

132 Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* p. 11

133 Muñoz, *Disidentifications,* p. 5.

134 Achille Mbembe discusses whiteness as entrapment in "Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive," https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-%20Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf

135 Demos, *Radical Futurisms*, p. 207.

136 Aimé Césaire, letter to Maurice Thorez, October 24, 1956, https://libcom.org/article/letter-maurice-thorez

137 Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 9.

138 Demos, *Radical Futurisms,* pp. 206–17

139 Fred Moten, in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe/New York/Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013), p. 10.

140 For a critical report from the training camp, see Sumugan Sivanesan, "Killing the Dominant Narrative: Geopolitics and Trainings for the Future," in *March*, December 2020, https://march.international/killing-the-dominant-narrative-geopolitics-and-training-for-the-future/

141 During this interim, Kawara began to give the piece a different kind of temporal presence: in 1993, beginning at the Dia Art Foundation in New York, he started to organize public readings (and recordings) from the volumes in museums and other art spaces.

142 Jonas Staal, "Monument to Capital," *uncube*, April 14, 2015, http://www.uncubemagazine.com/blog/15508779. Originally a 'study" from 2013, *Monument to Capital* was developed into an installation in 2017.

143 Staal, "Monument to Capital."
144 Staal, "Monument to Capital."
145 Quoted from the unpublished script of "Transformella Cinis Kosmosomatik 4.4.6.10.X – KosmoSomatische Kaffeefahrt," August 31, 2022.
146 Tina M. *Campt, Listening to Images* (Durham NC/ London: Duke University Press, 2017, p. 6.
147 Natascha Sadr Haghighian, "Knotting Against the Machine," in Maria Hlavajova and Sven Lütticken (eds.), *Deserting from the Culture Wars* (Utrecht/ Cambridge MA: BAK/MIT Press, 2020), p. 181.
148 Lovink and Rossiter, "Propositions on the Organizational Form," p. 91.
149 Otto Neurath, *Lebensgestaltung und Klassenkampf* (Berlin: Laubsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), p. 19. The declension in the text is "kommender Lebensstimmung."
150 "Circular to all the Federations of the International Association of Workers, or The Sonvilier Circular," November 12, 1871, https://www.panarchy.org/jura/sonvilier.eng.html
151 Carl Boggs quoted in Paul Raekstad, "Revolutionary Practice and Prefigurative Politics: A Clarification and Defense," in *Constellations*, no. 25 (2018), p. 362. For Boggs, workers' councils were a crucial form of prefigurative practice.
152 I take a cue here from Stefan Jonsson's lecture "Figures of Autonomy? Notes on Collective Agency and the Tweets, Drops and Masks of Freedom," Hägerstensåsens Medborgarhus, June 14, 2024.
153 Neurath, *Lebensgestaltung und Klassenkampf,* p. 23.
154 On the genealogy of Lebensform/life-form/form-of-life, see my essay "Habitual Art History" in André Rottmann (ed.), *In the Maze of Media: Essays on the Pathways of Art after Minimalism* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2024), forthcoming.
155 Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" (1973), in *Culture and Materialism* (1980; London/New York: Verso, 2005), p. 43.

Capitalism and Schismogenesis

With the return of Cold War scenarios, the social imaginary is undergoing a renewed reduction. In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sandro Mezzadra looked back to the distant times of 2003, when the *New York Times* called the peace movement coming out of Seattle, Porto Alegre, and Genoa the "second world power."[1] If the slogan "Another world is possible" best summarizes the last two to three decades of non-dogmatic (autonomist, alter-globalist, feminist, indigenous, abolitionist) emancipatory politics, today the range of conceivable alternatives is increasingly reduced to the currently available models. This appearance of stifled possibilities is precisely part of the problem.

During the historical Cold War, the German ideologeme of the "Wettkampf der Systeme" (contest of systems) encapsulated the notion that the "Free West" and the Warsaw Pact represented genuinely different systems – something East and West could actually agree on, although an assortment of anti-Moscow leftist positions and groups contested the claims of "actually existing socialism," for instance by critiquing state socialism as de facto state capitalism.[2] It is telling that German media have in recent years taken to reusing the "Wettkampf der Systeme" trope with regard to China – a surveillance-capitalist version of state capitalism.[3] Historians call the emergence of industrial capitalism in eighteenth-century Europe,

and not under the broadly similar conditions of East Asia, the Great Divergence.[4] Today, concerns over China and the new economic bloc that is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which unites Russia and China with a host of smaller Eurasian countries, obscure the *reconvergence* that has taken place as various varieties of capitalist statecraft face off against each other. The only "world powers" appear to be those that curtail emancipatory forces in different ways and to different degrees – and those degrees do, of course, matter deeply. While taking an entirely disabused view of various authoritarian regimes, one can still question their supposed alterity. For many on the American right, for instance, the undermining of democratic structures and procedures is perfectly in keeping with the American project, rather than its negation.

In the present gridlock, it becomes all the more imperative to be attentive to forms of emergence; not in the sense of the biologizing discourse on emergent properties, but in the historical terms proposed by Raymond Williams in the 1970s and 1980s. Williams distinguished between residual, dominant, and emergent forms – with *forms* here referring to practices that are as social as they are cultural. Vehemently opposed to a simplistic "superstructural" definition of culture, and to the reduction of art to objects, he discussed social and cultural forms as profoundly imbricated. As a Marxist, Williams's key historical examples of emergence were the new cultural forms generated by the rise of first the bourgeoisie and then the working class, but more broadly he notes that in any given society, "there is always other social being and consciousness which is neglected and excluded: alternative perceptions of others, in immediate relationships; new perceptions and practices of the material world."[5] Some such perceptions have been bursting to the surface in recent years, in the form of BLM and #MeToo, of decolonial, climate justice and LGBTQ+ movements – in turn triggering a reactionary backlash, and an endless series of culture war battles, with Putin's Russia serving as a not-so-secret ideal for parts of the far right.

Certain Marxists oppose "identity politics" as superstructural

distraction to "real" class-based politics. Though this is a counter-productive oversimplification, the proliferation of identities, subjectivities, and communities does raise questions. Do these remain lifestyles within contemporary capitalism, or could they function as emergent nuclei and networks of post-capitalist forms of life? Williams argued that emergent culture "depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of form," and such forms may be tentative and contradictory. They may remain, for the time, in a state of preemergence: "Again and again what we have to observe is in effect a *pre-emergence*, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be more confidently named."[6] Historical thought needs to be attuned to such preemergence, while remaining wary of wishful thinking. For Williams, this involved being attuned to "the specificity of present being," which may not always already be fixed and fully formed, or institutionalized, manifesting itself in "structures of feeling" that "do not always have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits one experience and on action."[7]

The contemporary is a contested state of co-temporality – which also includes survivals that may be much more than "merely" residual.[8] How to write history as it unfolds – a history of the present that is not *presentist*, that can function as a proleptic history of the not-yet? Here, I take the vagaries and antinomies of contemporary artistic, theoretical and activist practice as crucial material to work with, and to work through, so as to focus on divergent forms of (pre-)emergence. Reassessing operative concepts from a constellation of intellectual genealogies can help provide a basis for a critical diagnosis and inform further practice. In the process, the suggestion of a linear historical succession – emergent forms becoming dominant becoming residual – will have to be questioned. It may make sense to exercise caution and speak of *divergent* cultural social and cultural forms without necessarily mapping them onto such a sequence. Such forms can diverge from and clash with *each other* as they branch off into

incompatible yet coexistent directions, into divergent histories. It remains to be seen whether they become concatenated to the point where they would amount to another Great Divergence.

Sovereignty: Multiple and Layered

One basic question needs to be stated as simply and crudely is possible: What *is* the dominant order of society in and against which new practices and relationships may be created? How to conceptualize it? Williams's conceptual apparatus is that of Marxism: means of production, productive relations. If modern social and political theory have been marked by a tension between theories of capitalism and of the state, Williams falls squarely into the former camp. However, the relation between capital and sovereignty clearly needs to be rethought. Wendy Brown has characterized the current situation as one in which "States persist as nonsovereign actors," and "many characteristics of sovereignty" now appear in the realm of finance.[9] Brown argues that "in a post-Westphalian order, sovereign nation-states no longer exclusively define the field of global political relations or monopolize many of the powers organizing that field, yet states remain significant actors in that field, as well as symbols of national identification."[10]

If the Hobbesian sovereign, in Joseph Vogl's analysis, could declare himself sovereign by virtue of his status as universal creditor who is himself indebted to no one, the rise of public debt undermined sovereignty: "The cycle of public borrowing and private credit was already seen as a ruinous exception to the exceptionality of sovereign power in the early modern period," and today finance and debt again wreak havoc on a conception of sovereignty as embodied by the nation state.[11] A long-dominant form, the nation-state – ideally "democratic," but not necessarily so – slides into the residual register as the very deterritorialization of sovereignty that it had propelled, through imperialism and colonialism, goes into overdrive. As Joshua Clover put it in the delightfully lowbrow terms of a blog post: "We need to stop fucking around with theory

and say, without hesitation, that capitalism, with its industrial body and crown of finance, is sovereign; that carbon emissions are the sovereign breathing; that *make work and let buy* must be annihilated; that there is no survival while the sovereign lives."[12]

However, if we zoom in on this global Empire, we find divergences in the form of, for instance, neonationalist retrenchments – leading, indeed, to Cold War reenactments, but without "actually existing socialism" being part of the mix. There's also the complementary phenomenon of special economic zones. As inventorized by Keller Easterling, the *zone* represents the fracturing and layering of sovereignty as the state suspends some of its own laws so as to compete for capital: "Operating under authorities independent from the domestic laws of its host country, the zone typically provides premium utilities and a set of incentives-tax exemptions, foreign ownership of property, streamlined customs, cheap labor, and deregulation of labor or environmental laws-to entice business."[13] During the 2010s, Easterling's work on the zone commingled with the likes of Benjamin Bratton, Hito Steyerl, and Metahaven on the pages of magazines and edited volumes.[14]

This para-academic mix of theory and art can be placed in a genealogical continuum spanning back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the time, the reconceptualization of sovereignty received a boost precisely through a heady mix of speculative fiction and theoretical speculation – sometimes of a decidedly dodgy nature. Cyberpunk and "cypherpunk" novelists and theorists with links to the burgeoning hacker scene started imagining and conceptualizing a breakdown of traditional national sovereignty due to the rise of the internet. The notion of the *data haven* – a tax haven for data beyond the reach of major nation states – features in certain William Gibson novels and, very centrally, in Bruce Sterling's *Islands in the Net* (1988). The latter paints a picture of a world largely run by transnational corporations who find their dialectical counterpart in island strongholds such as Granada, run as datahavens by postcolonial buccaneers.[15] Another novel centered around the datahaven concept, Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* (1999), was invoked by

Daniel van der Velden and Vinca Kruk alongside Negri and Hardt's *Empire* when, in 2004-2005, they constituted themselves as the design and theory collective Metahaven.[16]

In their early work, Metahaven investigated the crisis and transformations of territorial sovereignty via the logic of branding, devising new visual identities for microstates or city states, or for WikiLeaks – the latter, of course, the seeming apogee of hacktivist attacks on the nation state, before Assange revealed his closeness to a certain neo-autocracy.[17] Van der Velden and Kruk's inaugural project was a research project on Sealand, a North-Sea "principality" that attempted to position itself as an actual datahaven. Having been operated as an unrecognized micronation on a platform in the North Sea since the 1960s, Sealand had already issued stamps and coins when technolibertarian entrepreneurs identified it as the perfect datahaven after the Caribbean island of Anguilla – a self-governing British Overseas Territory – turned out to have pesky laws. They founded HavenCo to great publicity, promising safe data storage on Sealand – but the venture

ultimately foundered, mostly because of the drawbacks of what had been Sealand's main selling point: "Sealand is a toy nation with a toy legal system, not a stable business environment."[18]

The late 1990s and early 2000s were marked by the "Californian ideology" of *Wired* discourse, which manifested itself in the libertarian cyber-utopian manifesto of John Perry Barlow's "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace."[19] However, perhaps the most illuminating piece of speculation to come out of this period was James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg's *The Sovereign Individual* (1997). The authors were the publishers of the Strategic Investment newsletter, and their book is a hymn to a transnational or postnational über-class to come: "the nation-state will be replaced by new forms of sovereignty, some of them unique in history, some more reminiscent of the city-states and medieval merchant republics of the premodern world."[20] Noting that local warlords littered Europe with castles, the authors are ecstatic about a feudal society in which kings cannot challenge "the local supremacy of the lords."[21] There are residual medievalisms in today's Europe such as the corporate sovereignty of the Knights of Malta, "an affinity group for rich Catholics" that might one again become 'a sovereign microstate'."[22]

Davidson and Rees-Mogg are pioneering ideologues of techno-feudalism and of what Quinn Slobodian has termed the "crack-up capitalism" that is carving up the planet into zones.[23] They cite Neal Stephenson's fictional cyberspace Metaverse (which more recently inspired the name of Facebook's holding company) to argue that increases in bandwidth will soon make possible networked communities whose "participants will seek and obtain exemption from the anachronistic laws of nation-states."[24] Stating that "you will soon see the ultimate form of privatization – the sweeping denationalization of the individual," the duo predicts that such individuals will be as powerful as the mythical Gods of the Ancient Greeks, mingling with mortals at will but unaccountable to them.[25] Rees-Mogg and Davidson assume the sovereignty of capital over the state but concretize it

by focusing on a transnational über-class that fractures the supposedly homogeneous space of globalization, creating its own pockets of hyper-sovereignty. In the meantime, of course, the deterritorialization of capital has taken another leap with cryptocurrencies – beloved by the technolibertarian right for their technological solution to the "trust problem," doing away with dependency on despises state structures and government-backed "fiat money."[26] With deflationary scarcity built into their design, cryptocurrencies come to function more as speculative assets than as currencies: "For global tycoons, it's just an alternative to parking their money in some real estate they would never visit."[27] For technolibertarians, however, there is a real ideological investment as well.

The conjuncture of cryptocurrency and the seasteading "movement" is particularly telling here. Founded by Patri Friedman and *Sovereign Individual* reader Peter Thiel, the Seasteading Institute sought to create libertarian utopias of non-state sovereignty in international waters – or failing that, in the territorial waters of some nation that could be persuaded to create a special economic zone. Such floating islands or other artificial constructions would be real-life "islands in the net," pirate heavens for financiers such as Thiel. When cryptocurrencies took off, the seasteaders developed the Varyon currency to fund and run an "autonomous sea community" in French Polynesia.[28] The plan, like other seasteading ventures so far, went nowhere – yet "Blockchain imperialism" is thriving in the Pacific.[29] In line with older libertarian island utopias (including Sealand, which began issuing its own currency in 1972), Silicon Valley entrepreneurs see Pacific islands as blank slates to be remodeled by crypto capitalism: Islands on the Blockchain. The Marshall Islands, for instance, have introduced a blockchain-based cryptocurrency, the tellingly named Sovereign (or SOV), though the rhetoric of sovereignty is rather undercut by the fact that the project is masterminded by a cabal of tech entrepreneurs – including Patri Friedman. Meanwhile, *Sovereign Individual* fan and cryptocurrency pioneer Balajij Srinivasan postulates secessionist online

communities coming together via apps, games and Bitcoin, and potentially forming "cloud countries."[30]

In his lectures on sovereignty and power, Foucault dryly noted that "in the West, right is the right of the royal command."[31] In this respect, Thiel and his ilk are nothing if not traditional; the sovereign individual as the king of capitalist deterritorialization. In aiming to redefine power as something that "circulates" rather than is passed down from sovereign heights, Foucault largely bypassed the redefinition of sovereignty as *popular* sovereignty with the American and French Revolutions, and with the separation of powers. The concept has remained something of a theoretical headache. Commenting on "political sovereignty's roving and ambiguous meaning today," Wendy Brown has observed that "in liberal democratic practice, where what denotes sovereignty in the Schmittian sense (decisionist state power) is not named as sovereign in the Lockean or Rousseauian sense (popular legislative power)."[32] Agamben's account of sovereignty collapses the two: Rolling out his potentialist-destituent critique of power with a rigid chiliasm that is itself deeply problematic, he presents constituent power as always sliding into a constituted power that has the Schmittian ability to abrogate the law in the state of exception.

In a far more down-to-earth register, Brown argues that "popular democracy" is a striking contradiction in terms: "It is nearly impossible to reconcile the classical features of sovereignty – power that is not *only* foundational and unimpeachable, but enduring and indivisible, magisterial and awe-inducing, decisive and supralegal – with the requisites of rule by the *demos*."[33] In actual practice, the rule of the people gets relegated to periodic elections, and perhaps referendums, making it at best "a discontinuous, episodic, and subordinate *practice,* rather than an actual sovereign power."[34] Beyond these moment of democratic participation, however, the very concept of popular sovereignty can be a potent political weapon. In moments of populist upheaval or fascist takeover, the invocation of "the people" can function at least

as well to dismantle the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy than it can to uphold them – possibly better, in fact.

That Thiel is preoccupied with furthering the sovereignty of capital vis-à-vis the nation state has not, of course, prevented him from selling AI tools to the US state apparatus for use in the War on Terror or from supporting Trump, who promised to restore national sovereignty and "make America great again – just as William Rees-Mogg's son Jacob campaigned for Brexit while the company he co-owns (Somerset Capital Management) set up investment funds in Ireland.[35] This is the double promise of contemporary far-right *sovereignism*: The one percent can become post-national sovereign individuals – possibly prepping a retreat to luxury bunkers guarded by a private army – while the rest get assurances of a restoration national sovereignty.[36] This promise of a "restored" national sovereignty always holds the promise – the potential – of untrammeled white supremacy. When the right-wing German glossy *Compact* – which was banned in 2024 – calls itself a *Magazin für Souveränität,* the message is clear: We, the *true* German people, will "retake our country." At times, fascism hold out the promise of inclusion in the Volk [italics] to certain racialized groups, yet inclusion if always revocable and comes at the cost of others (newer waves if immigrants). By contrast, progressive theorists have sought to radically reopen the notion of "the people."

Classification Clashes

In the early years of the twenty-first century, Chantal Mouffe's notions of antagonism and agonism and Jacques Rancière's account of dissensus promised to put the political back into politics, against the background of Habermas's conception of deliberative democracy as "the exercise of reason in the public sphere" with its idealization of the bourgeois public sphere and its disavowal of Western rationality's necropolitical underpinnings.[37] Mouffe and Laclau's project – particularly potent in the context of the War on

Terror in the wake of 9/11 – was to rescue democracy both from the rationalism of deliberative democracy, seen as being complicit with Third Way politics, and from Schmittian sovereign executive action producing a state of exception.

For Mouffe, it was insufficient to big up popular sovereignty against sovereign state action, since any notion of "the people" depends on a "constitutive outside" that can easily be marshaled to Schmittian (and fascist) ends by being cast in the role of the enemy of the people. To truly enact the democratic paradox, and to foreclose the construction of a Schmittian antagonism between the people and their enemy, is to construct a proper democratic *agonism* as a productive and ongoing renegotiation of the constitutive exclusion.[38] Building on Mouffe, Judith Butler has insisted on the need to opening "the people" up to a "further elaboration" against identitarian closures.[39] This does not solve the problem of the *differential inclusion* of minorities into the body politic, with latecomers remaining second-class citizens, but Butler's contention appears to be that a constant performative challenge to this mechanism will be able to make a discernible difference.[40]

Rancière, meanwhile, pitted his account of dissensus explicitly against Habermasian accounts of "communicative action," which "presupposes partners that are already pre-constituted as such and discursive forms that entail a speech community, the constraint of which is always explicable."[41] In reality, political dissensus occurs when workers, for instance, enter the sphere of bourgeois politics to "make visible the fact that they belong to a shared world that others do not see." The political community is structurally divided into different *peoples*; Rancière avers that a political people is never the same as "the population" in empirical, numerical terms, nor can it be equated to conservative or fascist conceptions of Das Volk. In fact, "political conflict opposes several 'peoples' in one: the people inscribed in the existing forms of the law and the constitution; the people embodied in the State; the one ignored by the law or whose right the State does not recognize and the one that makes its claims in the name of another right that is yet to be inscribed in facts."[42]

Amplifying Rancière, Georges Didi-Huberman has insisted that "there is not *a people*; there are only coexistent *peoples*," even within the same population.[43] But if dissensus "is the construction of a paradoxical world that puts together two separate worlds," then what happens if the two worlds increasingly refuse to enter into a productive conjunction?[44] With radicalization through social-media filter bubbles having transformed the political landscape, Rancière and Mouffe's leftist projects seem almost as residual and retro as Habermas's liberal ideologizing. For Rancière, the forging of "the working class" or "the (industrial) proletariat" as a class-conscious political force is certainly the key historical example of this process, but – defined in such differential and non-essential terms – these peoples can also be women, people of color or LGBTQ+ coalitions, as they are for Butler. In various progressive and liberal imaginaries, a version of this process is cast in whiggish, linear terms: Formerly disenfranchised groups will be included in a Great Society of some sort. However, the present moment presents us with divergent forms of emergence, re-emergence and pre-emergence that are not easily mapped onto any linear historical progression.

Debates about the social composition of the Brexit, Trump or AfD vote tend to become a muddle of socio-economic and cultural-ideological vectors – the result of the way in which populist campaigns compose "a people."[45] Far-right demagogues have successfully created affective regimes on the basis of a racialized retightening of the definition of the people even while making tacit or explicit offers of inclusion to some groups. In their speech acts, many far-right leaders effectively embrace a critical, performative conception of "the people": Certain groups be cast as the "good" immigrants and tacitly assimilated to the white middle or upper class, while LGTBQ+ rights can be given an Islamophobic inflection.[46] A materialist historical analysis must do justice to the complex interplay of economic, social and ideological factors in processes of social formation and composition.

Just what *is* the role of conscious and collective self-identification, beyond purely economic indicators, in class composition? The local classicus of this debate is Marx's remark in the *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis* Bonaparte on the French peasantry, which was a class in economic terms but had "no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them."[47] Discussions about class consciousness were rife in in 1970s Marxism; in one particular exchange, Perry Anderson critiqued E.P. Thomson's *The Making of the English Working Class* for over-emphasizing class consciousness and neglecting hard economic indicators. This is not to say, of course, that Anderson described to a positivist notion of class. His nuanced discussion of different levels of historical agency, ends with "those collective projects which have sought to render their initiators authors of their collective mode of existence as a whole, in a conscious program aimed at creating or remodeling whole social structures."[48] Clearly, then, "class" becomes a different kind of historical agent when it becomes an active point of identification and reflection. And this, for Williams, is when "those practices, experiences, meanings, values which are not part of the effective dominant culture" can go from being *alternative* to being properly *oppositional.*[49]

Neither Thompson nor Anderson – nor most other male British 1970s Marxists, Raymond Williams included – paid significant attention to the problematizations of Marxist accounts of class emerging from Black, anti-colonial, feminist and queer movements. As the 70s progressed, an increasing divergence became apparent between a (male- and white-dominated) class-based Marxist political theory and practice and the emergent autonomous social movements. It should be noted that in the 1970s context, the notion of autonomous social movements often referred less to Italian autonomous Marxism as than to feminist, gay or Black groups that had become autonomous from any Leninist vanguard – *even* in its post-Leninist, Operaist guise.[50] A key example of a feminist movement with some roots in autonomous Marxism, while challenging its parameters in

a process of immanent critique, is the Wages for Housework campaign, whose key theorists and organizers included Mariarosa dalla Costa, Selma James and Silvia Federici. Indicative of the tensions between various "autonomous movements," Wages for Housework – like 1970s feminism in general – is often accused of disregarding the struggles of women or color, or the labor performed by Black women outside of the heteronormative white household.

This accusation hardly holds for Selma James; with her background in C.L.R. James's post-Trotskyist Forest-Johnson tendency and in feminist community work, James developed a seminal analysis of the dialectic of "class" and "caste" – the latter being her term for non-class identity in terms of gender and race, which is "the very substance of class."[51] The point of her early intersectionalism was not to play these categories off against each other, but to do justice to the "complex interweaving of forces" in social composition – noting, for instance, that "Black women will know what organization (with Black men, with white women, *with both, with neither*) to make that struggle. *No one else can know.*"[52] Here, then, we are dealing with an analysis that complements and complicates Williams's account of emergence. Multiple identities may diverge and reconverge over time. Black Marxists become Black Nationalists, female socialists become feminists, queer theorists and antiracist activists create coalitions for social justice that go beyond and challenge reductive notions of identity politics – even while lines keep being drawn among those who might be allies or comrades.

Peoples proliferate, and overlap, and may collide within one person. In the words of artist Andrea Fraser, we might say that these are *classification wars,* rather than traditional class wars.[53] As "collective projects" and "collective agency" take on new and complex forms, how *can* processes of collective self-identification be grasped – not just historically, but also the social media-driven present? How can such processes be intervened in and *shaped*? What, is the role of disidentification between various "peoples"

who cast each other in the role of other, alien, enemy? Are divergences always motivated by opposition, manifesting themselves through negation?

Counter-Imitation and Schismogenesis

In the course of the 1970s and into the '80s, a Deleuzo-Guattarian/Autonomist shift to molecular micropolitics became ever more pronounced in the theory and activism. Critical of the more orthodox brands of Marxism, Deleuze and Guattari sought out alternative ancestors and turned one of the founders of French sociology, Gabriel Tarde, into a radical thinker – precisely insofar as Tarde was non-dialectical, non-Hegelian, and non-Marxist.[54] Opposing a sociology that fetishizes binary and overcoded "collective representations," such as class, Deleuze and Guattari appreciated Tarde's micropolitical, molecular attention to "the little imitations, oppositions, and inventions constituting an entire realm of subrepresentative matter."[55] Tarde thus proved surprisingly relevant in relation to the molecular revolution of May '68. In *A Thousand Plateaus* – the second volume of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* – Deleuze and Guattari quote him as arguing that in order to understand revolutionary transformations, "what one needs to know is which peasants, in which areas in the South of France, stopped greeting the local landowners."[56] Without, of course, using Williams's language, Deleuze and Guattari side with forms of pre-emergence that may never fully settle into familiar categories such as class.

A central concept of Tarde's social philosophy is imitation, which he defined as "action at a distance of one mind upon another."[57] Distinguishing between imitation and counter-imitation, Tarde notes that some social actors are associated with each other negatively, by virtue of being adversaries. Deleuze and Guattari note Tarde's focus on "the little *imitations, oppositions,* and *inventions* constituting an entire realm of subrepresentative matter," but they abstain from discussing Tarde's analysis of imitation in

the realm of representation par excellence: the media and the opposing publics they constitute.[58]

> No opinion is discussed by the press about which, I repeat, the public is not daily divided into two camps, those who agree with the opinion and those who disagree. But the latter a well as the former admit that it is impossible to be concerned for the time being with anything other than the question which is this forced upon them.[59]

Around 1900, in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair, Tarde distinguished between the *crowd* (which has been theorized by Le Bon) and the *public*; the former is an embodied assembly, whereas the latter is a virtual entity created by print media – and, as such, a distinctly modern phenomenon. Tarde's publics are not quite the same as Habermas's idealized "reasoning public": They are produced and manipulated by professional journalistic agitators, and can be as murderous as crowds. Tarde's print publics already constitute filter bubbles. Whereas LeBon had focussed on the dangers of the crowd, for Tarde the lesson of the Dreyfus Affair, in which the French media had fueled Antisemitic conspiracy theories, was that publics were less diverse than crowds, and more open to manipulation.

In an analysis that takes on new relevance in the age of riots organized on social media, Tarde argued that crowds can become criminal, murderous mobs – but publics, too, can become criminal if properly moulded by opinion makers, and behind every murderous modern mob there's an even more criminal public.[60] It is no surprise that Tarde has become a reference for recent affect-theoretical accounts of the "spreadability" of hate on social media, while Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen struck a neo-Tardean note when noting that the platform has been design to foster extremism and fan hate, testifying to a UK parliamentary committee that "Anger and hate is the easiest way to grow on Facebook" – with disastrous consequences not just for the

Rohingya.[61] Such calculated publics are de facto calculated *counterpublics*, positioning themselves against the "mainstream media" and their "fake news." These tend to become so self-sealing that Rancière's "paradoxical world that puts together two separate worlds" fails to materialize. The worlds coexist but do not form a conjunction. Fundamentally, there is a disengagement with the other side, with the enemy – an *aggressive disengagement* that manifests itself precisely in endless trolling as well as physical violence against racialized or sexualized Others, and in attacks on institutions and organizations. From a Deleuzian perspective, all of this is depressingly *molar*: The culture wars revolve precisely around "overcoded representations," frequently of the most noxious kind (white Christian culture, etc.), imposing segmentations on the molecular assemblages that traverse the social realm.

This is precisely where Tarde's sociology of mimesis displays its limitations from a Deleuzian perspective. The main problem lies in what one could term Tarde's sociological realism: He attempts to identify and map social forms that are so many *processes of capture*, so many molar structures imposed on molecular becoming. This is why Deleuze and Guattari need to cherry-pick, and avoid an in-depth engagement with Tarde. They approach Gregory Bateson's thought in the same way, appropriating some elements while rejecting or glossing over others. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they note that Bateson uses the term plateau "to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end."[62] In Balinese culture, according to Bateson, sexually tinted games between mothers and their children substitute a "continuing plateau of intensity" for sexual climax, and Deleuze and Guattari use this to chide Western culture for its fixation on "exterior or transcendent ends.[63] What they do not mention is that Bateson's theorization of the plateau in Bali was occasioned by a failure, in the face of Balinese culture, of one of his key concepts: that of schismogenesis.[64]

Bateson's schismogenesis makes for a compelling companion piece to Tarde's counter-imitation.[65] In his 1936 classic *Naven*, Bateson described the "ethos" of the Iatmul people of New Guinea as being marked by a complex admixture of *complementary schismogenesis,* such as ritualistic boasting battles between (groups of) men, and *symmetrical schismogenesis,* for instance in the relations between the sexes. In the latter case, there was differentiation between different types of behavior, i.e. dominant and submissive, rather than rivalry on the basis of a shared behavioral form (boasting). The "naven" ritual, which involves gender inversion through cartoonish transvestitism, allowed Bateson to analyze these schismogenetic patterns in extreme forms. While he was clearly convinced that he could extrapolate from the Iatmul case, and that all societies are partly shaped through this kind of "cumulative behavior," Balinese ethos turned out to be different.[66] "Schismogenetic sequences were not found in Bali," Bateson notes, which "conflicts with so many theories of social opposition and Marxian determinism."[67]

One can hear Deleuze and Guattari applaud, yet it should be noted that Bateson did not replace one paradigm (schismogenesis) with another (the plateau). Rather, his analysis suggests that

some societies have a "distaste for schismogenetic sequences" and organize their culture accordingly, seeking to substitute "a plateau for a climax."[68] Bateson presented this as *one* type of culture among others, and as a fairly exceptional one. He continued to return to schismogenesis, a concept whose versatility was evident early on; indeed, the difference between "plateau-type" and "schismogenetic" societies could itself be seen as an example of schismogenesis *between* different societies. Already in *Naven*, Bateson used it to analyze colonial contact, explaining that "the average European resident believes that the natives in all parts of New Guinea are remarkably similar in all parts of the country" because the natives "have adopted the same tactics in dealing with the Europeans," creating the same schismogenic pattern everywhere.[69] Beyond that, he summarily applied the notion to phenomena such as class war (complementary) and international rivalries (symmetrical).[70] After WWII, in the context of emerging cybernetics and systems theory, Bateson (re)conceptualized schismogenesis as being regulated through feedback in self-corrective causal circuits.[71]

This very concept avoided by Deleuze and Guattari, schismogenesis, has come to the fore in recent theory. Rodrigo Nunes's *Neither Vertical Nor Horizontal* not only draws on Tarde, but also on Bateson, and argues that neo-Leninist melancholia for "1917" and autonomist melancholia over "1968" exist in "a relationship of mutual reinforcement that corresponds quite precisely to what Gregory Bateson called *symmetrical schismogenesis*," i.e., a "cumulative interaction" in which the members of two groups react to each other with an identical pattern of behavior, with equal intensity but in opposite directions."[72] In Bateson's words, this has the effect that "each group will drive the other into excessive emphasis of the pattern, a process which if not restrained can only lead to more and more extreme rivalry and ultimately to hostility and the breakdown of the whole system."[73]

Most commonly, Bateson's notion is used in the context in which it originated: the study of indigenous or tribal societies. In an essay on the anarchist anthropology of Pierre Clastres, Eduardo

Viveiros de Castro notes that Clastres effectively distinguishes between "complementary" and "symmetrical" societies in the North-West Amazon.[74] Whereas Viveiros here follows Bateson's lead in discussing schismogenetic processes *within* individual tribes/societies, Clastres's famous claim that many tribal societies have created mechanisms for preventing the emergence of hierarchies and state-like structures can itself be read in schismogenetic terms: These "societies against the state" do not represent some aboriginal primitive evolutionary phrase, but a form of symmetrical schismogenesis through which these tribes differentiate themselves from more hierarchical states in that part of the world.[75] David Graeber and David Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything* (2021) is rife with references to both Clastres and Bateson. While Graeber was critical of Clastres's blind spots and epistemological naiveté, *The Dawn of Everything* insists along Clastrean, that some societies are organized according to rules that are fundamentally different from those that underpin Western modernity, and that such divergences must not be explained away by placing them in a linear evolutionary metanarrative.[76]

In response to Bateson, Graeber and Wengrow note that "Bateson was interested in psychological processes within societies, but there's every reason to believe something similar happens *between* societies as well. People come to define themselves against their neighbors" – something that Bateson was hardly unaware of, as his remarks on colonial contact in New Guinea suggest.[77] Graeber and Wengrow argue that something along those lines happened not only between different native societies in the Americas, but also between European settlers and native Americans. More specifically, it occurred between indigenous American and European intellectuals during the eighteenth century. In their brilliant chapter on the "indigenous critique" of European society, Graeber and Wengrow against the assumption that the "noble savages" who proffer critiques of European society in the writings of Enlightenment writers were nothing but convenient fictional mouthpieces for the authors' opinions. However, Graeber

and Wengrow adduce evidence that the model of many of these texts, the Baron de Lahontan's 1703 dialogues with the Native American statesman Kandiaronk, give the reader a real sense of the latter's critical views of European society and morals. Faced with an expansionist form of life marked by unfreedom and inequality, Kandiaronk came to define Native American society in starkly opposite terms – a striking example of complementary schismogenesis *between societies*.[78]

To what extent is this applicable to the present?[79] In a surprisingly totalizing statement that evokes Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, Graeber and Wengrow note that "ever since the Iberian invasion of the Americas, and subsequent European colonial empires, […] there's ultimately been just one political-economic system and it is global. If we wish, say, to assess whether the modern nation state, industrial capitalism and the spread of lunatic asylums are necessarily linked, as opposed to separate phenomena that just happen to have come together in one part of the world, there's simply no basis on which to judge. All three emerged at a time when the planet was effectively a single global system and we have no other planets to compare ourselves to."[80]

While Graeber and Wengrow largely avoid using the c-word altogether and often appear to disconnect the analysis of the state from any systemic account of the rise of capitalism, here they arrive at a nuanced position: It is not "the state" or "capitalism" that is sovereign, but a politico-economic system in which the nation-state has served as a conduit for capital, even while regulating and at times blocking its flows. But if the nation-state was an "amalgam of elements" that are now "in the process of drifting apart," then what extent will this process of disintegration open up a potential for fundamental divergence?[81]

To be sure, many divergences would seem to remain within the framework of ever later capitalism. The ideological divide between men and women is widening, with young men increasingly being drawn into the orbit of conservative and misogynist

influencers. If this appears to echo Bateson's analysis of gender among the Iatmul, the historical process of radicalization introduces a significant difference. For instance, when students go beyond progressive content to protesting and organizing, and living their lives as prefigurative practice, the difference between inner- and inter-systemic schismogenesis is not that clear-cut.

Fugitivity and Intercommunalism

Raymond Williams's opposition between the merely *alternative* and the properly *oppositional* (think 1960s counterculture versus the politicized New Left) was called into question by the micropolitical turn of the 1970s and 1980s, associated with Deleuze and Guattari's writing. While the effects of this have been ambiguous, it was also a theoretically and tactically rich moment.[82] With the notion of desertion being given positive valence – as in Raunig's insistence that "flight and exodus are nothing negative, not a reaction to something else" – it was now *oppositional* practices that came to be regarded as limited, as insufficiently alternative, as they remained beholden to what they oppose through an always partial negation.

A Deleuzian emphasis on divergences that are irreducible to counter-imitation or complementary schismogenesis can also be found in the work of Isabelle Stengers, who strikes a Deleuzian note when she argues that processes of divergence should not be understood as "'diverge from others," as doing so would turn divergence into fuel for comparison. "Divergence is not between practices; it is not relational. It is constitutive. A practice does not define itself in terms of its divergence from others. Each does have its own positive and distinct way of paying due attention; that is, of having things and situations matter. Each produces its own line of divergence, as it likewise produces itself."[83] Stengers's turn of phrase, "line of divergence," is one of her recurring references to Deleuze and Guattari's *line of flight*.[84] This concept, in turn, points to yet another element in the theoretical assemblage of *A Thousand Plateaus*: American Black radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The

notes of imprisoned "Soledad Brother" and Black Panther activist George Jackson were published in a French translation in 1971, and in that same year Foucault's Prisons Information Group (GIP) put out a tract titled *L'assassinat de George Jackson*.

Jackson's dictum that "I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon" became a crucial reference for the elaboration of the concept of lines of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus*.[85] Here, too, the use or appropriation of an author proceeds by way of decontextualization and abstraction – and in many respects, this parallels the occlusion of the theoretical contributions made by Black Panther activists. It is hard to argue with Harney and Moten's assessment that autonomism has a "debt at a distance to the black radical tradition" – and it is perhaps precisely in the maintenance of this distance that the debt lies.[86] If Jackson's fugitivity was transmuted into Deleuzian desertion, more problematic than such appropriation is the decades-long theoretical neglect of the main Black Panther theorist, Huey P. Newton, who is only now beginning to come into view as an "unacknowledged intellectual" of the New Left.[87] To be sure, this is an intellectual and organizer with deeply troubling moments and patterns of sexualized violence in his biography, which must be part of the overall reassessment that is beginning to take shape.[88]

In *Commonwealth*, Hardt and Negri begin a much-needed process of reassessment by noting the importance of Newton's abandonment of his earlier Black nationalist "affirmation of identity": Newton "progressively shifts the revolutionary framework from nationalism to internationalism and finally "intercommunalism" in an effort to designate a theoretical framework for liberation that implies the abolition of racial identity and its structures of insubordination."[89] Newton's intercommunalism was an attempt to articulate emergent forms of collective identification and collaboration beyond and against the nation-state. "We say that the world today is a dispersed collection of communities. A community is different from a nation. A community is a small unit with a comprehensive collection of institutions that serve to exist a small group of people."[90] Newton argued that the present world was in the stage of reactionary intercommunalism, which is marked by "the struggle in the world today is between the small circle that administers and profits from the empire of the United States, and the peoples of the world who want to determine their own destinies."[91] Here, in other words, there is no equality between small communities, but a situation in which a "community" that is an imperial elite extracts value from the world in the framework of a nation-state become global hegemon. The diagnosis was prescient, even if some of the details are dated.

For Newton, it was clear that "reactionary intercommunalism (empire)" needed to be replaced by "revolutionary intercommunalism. The people of the world, that is, must seize power from the small ruling circle and expropriate the expropriators."[92] The translation of this revolutionary horizon into revolutionary practice could take diverse and contradictory forms. Newton regarded China, North Korea, and Vietnam as "liberated territories" ruled by their people, or communities – collapsing his concept of communities back into that of a nation-state ruled by a Party that serves as the people's avant-garde. The Black Panther Party, of course, modeled itself on such parties, and Newton's Oakland chapter was clearly were the Politbureau was located.[93] This is not

the time and place for a disquisition on the contradictions of (and between) Black Panther theory and practice, or of Newton's life. His pronouncement that "There will always be contradictions or else everything would stop" could be seen as an invitation to engage with even the most painful contradictions - with as much dialectical equanimity as can be managed.[94]

One particularly cogent feature of Newton's thinking is his rejection of identitarian closure and his insistence on intercommunal, or transversal, concatenation. His analysis of empire, as well as personal encounters, led him to the conviction that Black and gay liberation movements needed to combine their struggle, as both groups found themselves victimized and brutalized by the state apparatus.[95] The Black Panthers should not be seen as an "identitarian" movement in any reductive sense, with Newton asserting the need for a "universal identity" created through the dialectical interplay of social groups and forces, opposing "cultural, racial, and religious chauvinism, the kind of ethnocentrism we have now."[96] Janet Sarbanes's characterization of the Black Panthers as a form of Black autonomism is very much on point: While he appropriated Leninist/Maoist rhetoric and methods for the Black Panthers, his concept of community broadened the horizon of struggle and prevented him from getting bogged down in debates about class vs race or class vs. gender.[97] What united all the struggles and made intercommunalism a necessity was the various communities' experience of oppression.

However, it is obviously not a given that such experience will actually be seen as a shared experience, and become the basis for solidarity and action. As John Narayan argues, in an article that stages a critical dialogue between Newton, Deleuze and Hardt/Negri, "Newton's account of the divisive effects of reactionary intercommunalism on the multitude and the need to combat such effects" is a particularly productive feature of this thought," providing "the missing link Hardt and Negri fail to provide in their account of the revolutionary assemblages of the multitude."[98] Newton's insistence that "the material and ideological effects of

empire provide real and significant obstacles to the unification of a globally dispersed revolutionary subject" has never been more relevant.[99] With the Culture Wars creating beguiling bogeymen in the form of immigrants and "trans groomers," the symptoms of the symptoms of reactionary intercommunalism abound.

The collision of identities is articulated beautifully in *Twilight City* (1989), an essay film by the Black Audio Film Collective, whose members were well-versed in American and British Black radical theory. *Twilight City* is set in the Afro-Caribbean community in Thatcherite London, which is being displaced as the Isle of Dogs is turned into the Docklands financial district – a site of deterritorialized capital that actually had the status of an "enterprise zone."[100] The film's fictional narrator and a number of "talking head" interviewees reflect on a kind of negative intercommunalism talking hold: Paul Gilroy, in particular notes that in Thatcher's London, people often inhabit the same physical space, being "physically proximate," without actually encountering each other I any meaningful way.[101] Communities are connected only negatively, as competitors; at worst, they become enemies subjecting each other to racist or homophobic violence. The film's narrator, in fact, reveals that such negative intercommunalism runs right through her, as her Caribbean mother has no way of understanding her participation in queer nightlife: "As the old London dissolves, the lost souls are becoming more visible." Her friends are "creatures of the night" that her mother cannot accept. Her split identity is evoked in nocturnal views of London, as well as through staged tableaux of aestheticized (male) bodies. This nightlife may well be seen as a desertion from Thatcherite London, with uncertain lines of divergence veering off into different trajectories, from careers in the arts and academia to truly marginalized forms of existence. Meanwhile, Gail Lewis notes that Black people seem to move through London with more confidence, and that she is optimistic about the symbolic and cultural dimension, but depressed when it comes to the material side of surviving in London.

Twilight City toured the festival circuit in the autumn of 1989, around the time the Berlin Wall came down. In the wake of this historical event, in 1990, Stuart Hall and Fredric Jameson had a conversation for the British magazine *Marxism Today* in which they grappled with the prospect that both the second and the third worlds would be "netted" in "a new world system" of post-1989 global capitalism – with the term "world system" again evoking the Marxist "world-systems theory" developed by Wallerstein.[102] If both Jameson (the American Marxist theorist of postmodernism) and Hall (the Jamaican-British pioneer of cultural studies) where attentive readers of Raymond Williams, Jameson stresses the systemic and the dominant, whereas Hall sides with difference and emergence. For Jameson, postmodernism was marked by dominant culture becoming more pervasive and hegemonic than ever before. As a "tendentially complete modernization" in which "older remnants have been removed," postmodernism is the apogee of cultural imperialism.[103] Hall insists on a dialectical counterpoint: From his British postcolonial standpoint, what is key is that postmodern standardization and mass culture produce, in a dialectical reversal, "a proliferation of difference, of otherness."[104]

In 1989, Hall had contributed two lectures to a symposium on "Culture, Globalization and the World-System" at Binghamton University, home to Immanuel Wallerstein and his institute.[105] Here, Hall analyzed "the global postmodern" as falling short of becoming a "unitary regime," in contrast to what certain French theorists decreed. Noting that "marginality has become a powerful space," Hall asserts that "Our lives have been transformed by the struggle of the margins to come into representation."[106] Hall was of course highly aware of the limits of identitarian representation under capitalist conditions, with Blackness having the potential to sabotage as well as foster solidarity.[107] In the interview with Jameson, he acknowledges a fundamental problem: "Our sense of agency on the Left has always depended on a sense of coming together: solidarity – not just the "lonely rebel" individual. But it's exactly that sense of totality, of collective action and solidarity, which has been undermined by the new logic of "difference" which dominates the era of the postmodern."[108]

At Binghamton, Hall seemed more inclined to focus on potentiality. Invoking Williams, he suggested that the marginal can be a site of emergence: "In the contemporary arts, I would go so far as to say that, increasingly, anybody who cares for what is creatively emergent in the modern arts will find that it has something to do with the languages of the margin."[109] However, we might also consider this notion of the marginal as troubling Williams's conceptual distinctions: In the sphere of marginality, the residual and the emergent can be hard to disentangle. And *Twilight City,* from the same year, certainly suggests that marginality is contested terrain: under reactionary intercommunalism, the marginal can be internally divided and conflictual. Frustrating any clear divide between being inside and outside, the social margins in many ways intensify the pressures and contradictions of the system.

Unexpected Subjects: Negating Otherwise

The Black radical tradition is marked by a ricocheting debate on historical materialism, on the dialectical negation of the negation, and on Alexandre Kojève's Marxist interpretations of Hegel's parable of master and slave (or, in a more literal translation from the German, lord and bondsman) as the principle of class struggle and of history itself. If, in the register of theory, C.L.R. James largely tended to view anti-colonial struggle through the prism of class struggle, Sylvia Wynter has noted that his literary work went a step further: James's alter ego has the telling name of Matthew Bondsman and has "to come to terms with the fact that he had become '*refuse*.'"[110] Francophone Caribbean thinkers such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon effected a more decisive break. In Fanon's pithy gloss, the real-world master of the plantation "laughs at the consciousness of the slave" and wants relentless toil from his slaves, rather than something as useless and unproductive as "recognition."[111] As Donna V. Jones summarizes Fanon's critique, "The Hegelian dialectic simply does not seem to fit the experience of African slaves in the New World: it is nonsensical that chained and whipped slaves could see in work a vehicle for self-realization."[112] Emancipation thus needs to take the form of emancipation *from* work, not *through* work.

On the feminist side, Carla Lonzi likewise attacked Hegel's master-slave dialectic, again understood in Kojèvian terms as the dialectical principle of all history: "Had Hegel recognized the human origin of woman's oppression, as he did in the case of the slave's, he would have had to apply the master-slave dialectic in her case as well. But in doing so he would have encountered a serious obstacle. For, while the revolutionary method can capture the movement of the social dynamics, it is clear that woman's liberation could never be included in the same historical schemes. On the level of the woman-man relationship, there is no solution which eliminates

the other; thus the goal of seizing power is emptied of meaning."[113] This has radical consequences: "We recognize within ourselves the capacity for effecting a complete transformation of life. Not being trapped within the master-slave dialectic, we become conscious of ourselves; we are the Unexpected Subject."[114]

To a significant extent, the history of social movements in the last half-century has been shaped by Unexpected Subjects asserting their agency. The fallout has been significant, from paleo-leftist little sovereigns intoning endless wails of "Universalism! Universalism!" to the co-optation of new subjectivities as upwardly mobile identities. This development raises fundamental questions about history as an ongoing dialectical process operating through the negation of the negation. The question is not so much whether the historical dialectic has reached (or can reach) its culmination in The End of History, but what kinds of history are being pursued – possibly simultaneously, if asynchronously.

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx argued that socialism properly understood will be the abrogation of this process. If capitalism as based on private property negated the precapitalist stage, communism as a negation of capitalism will still bear the marks of the capitalist form of ownership and production. Communism in that sense cannot be the aim or end of history; it is a mediation still marked by the negation of the negation, and will be followed by a (post-)historical period of "positive self-consciousness" and "positive reality."[115] It is here that early Marx resonates both with Césaire and with Deleuze – two thinkers of the line of flight, with Deleuze insisting on the need for *undialectical negations* that amount to *positive difference*.[116] Deleuze and many in his wake rightly insist on the reality of such positive difference: It is not a matter of waiting for the end of history, but of opening up lines of flight and instigating divergences and desertions right here, right now, on a molecular level.

This is where Deleuze meets Negri and where Deleuzianism blends into autonomia. Autonomist desertions inspired in part by Deleuzian discourse can be seen as attempts to *enact*

schismogenesis otherwise, to produce constitutive divergences without following any sequence of negations decreed by the historical dialectic: "We dreamed of waking up every morning in a place where secession from the system was a permanent process."[117] In practice, it is not clear to what extent such desertions can extract themselves from the march of history. As some unexpected subjects are beginning to actualize potential forms of life and divergent social forms under precarious conditions, they are riven by external attacks and internal conflicts. This brings to mind Fredric Jameson's suggestion that there is *a dialectic between the non-dialectizable and the dialectizable.*[118] Such a second-degree dialectic relieves us from the false – undialectical – choice between two mutually exclusive options, leading to sophisticated but scholastic and unproductive debates about the question whether history still has a "dialectical direction."[119]

Creating different social relations under the reign of the value-form and the nation-state is obviously a tall order – but then, it is not necessarily always clear where this "reign" ends. Can the limits of capitalism be defined in any meaningful manner? Nancy Fraser has noted that "capitalism is something larger than an economy" in that it also remakes and shapes "the 'non-economic' background conditions that enabled such an 'economic system' to exist."[120] Capitalism, then, is expansive and expansionist. Another feminist critique of capitalism points in a different direction from Fraser's diagnosis: J.K Gibson-Graham's "Iceberg model" shows a visible tip with "wage labor, production for markets, capitalist business," while bubbling below the surface is the much bigger mass of non-market exchange and cooperation.[121] Here, contrary to Fraser, *the economy is something larger than capitalism*, if we use the term economy in a more encompassing sense for social (re)production.

Together, these positions account for the potentiality and the limits of anticapitalist schismogenesis. Yes, capitalism involves an imperialist conquest and transformation of social relations by the value-form, but the process is ongoing. Capitalist productive relations propel an ongoing process of primitive accumulation that is open-ended – at least economically, if not ecologically. There will always be new frontiers, new outsides. Climate collapse itself can be transmuted into a business opportunity. However, the antagonisms and leftovers that are generated in the process cannot be fully contained by the logic of capitalist development. Non-dialectizeable contradictions breed bloody conflicts; this is a planet of

war zones and toxic wastelands, of surplus populations and mass migrations. However, the dominant media imaginary of collapse and barbarism needs to be questioned.

What is at stake here is schismogenesis beyond the counter-mimetic mechanisms of diversifying and indeed clashing lifestyles and identities under capitalism, of culture wars and ideological divergences. To what extent, then, can one speak of an emerging schismogenetic divergence *between societies*, along the lines of Graeber and Wengrow's indigenous critique? With Gibson and Graham, it should be noted that residual forms of noncapitalist cooperation are everywhere in this world. Much contemporary activism revolves around attempts to transmute residual commons into a reemergent force. Beyond the merely residual, indigenous *survivance* – to use Gerald Vizenor's term – has led to an indigenous revival that inspires other forms of activism and cultural production.[122] Here, in a chronopolitical rethinking of historicity and futurity, divergence is no longer immediately predicated on a historical axis in which a cascade of determinate negations makes the dominant residual and the emergent dominant.

In a classic understanding of schismogenesis, this oppositional and relational element is primary; the schismogenetic process proceeds through negation and differentiation. With Stengers, we can posit *constitutive divergence* as primary; the relational and oppositional aspect would be a secondary consequence or effect. Even if we choose to side with desertions and divergences from history, with attempts to create undialectical negations and positive differences, there is always a relation between unexpected subjects in the process of unmaking and remaking themselves. The historical dialectic is not abrogated, but it is troubled. Familiar scripts must be rethought. Whether it is historical slaves or their contemporary descendants, or indigenous activists and cultural producers, or divergent subjectivities opening up onto "new perceptions and practices of the material world," all of these positions and practices assert that another history must be possible in order for another world to be.

The margins of a financialized and globalized art world provide some infrastructural support, some forums, for divergent social forms and schismogenetic articulations. Of course, contemporary art has long been implicated in the structures of capitalist globalization and the mechanisms of financialization; much visual art has become an asset class, serving as a speculative investment for an elite that knows how to use tax havens and freeports. Among "art workers," embodied contradictions breed behavioral pathologies. Arty discourse teems with terms like collaboration and care, but those caring collaborators are still neoliberal self-entrepreneurs working on their brand. "Critical" artists and organizations happily take handouts from the upper reaches of finance capital, German collectors *mit Nazihintergrund*, or the Sheikha of Sharjah.[123] Curators tirelessly pushing decolonial or feminist "content" behave like neoliberal war machines, and wokewashing abounds. The most plutocratic institutions tweet black squares in support of Black Lives Matter, and in an art magazine's "Power Top 100" of the art world, the 2021 number one spot was fashionably awarded to a nonhuman entity, a standard for NFTs, while number 35 is for a Black curator who works for one of the most powerful transnational gallery behemoths, which amounts to "changing the system from within."[124] The ideal product of contemporary cultural capitalism is woke crypto art. Approaching AI from the labor point of view, for instance by foregrounding the labor of clickworkers who train algorithms, is a minority pursuit. If contemporary art has been a force of emergence, it has been the emergence of the now-dominant – though increasingly crisis-ridden and fracturing – order.

Still: some practitioners have found ways of instrumentalizing the residual ideology of the autonomy of art and of (mis)using its infrastructures as incubators schismogenetic processes.[125] As with capitalism in general, the art world's fraying edges are everywhere. In a 2008 manifesto, the Russian art collective Chto Delat declared: "We believe that capitalism is not a totality, that the popular thesis that 'there is nothing outside capital' is false. The task of the intellectual and the artist is to engage in a thoroughgoing

unmasking of the myth that there are no alternatives to the global capitalist system. We insist on the obvious: a world without the dominion of profit and exploitation can not only be created but always already exists in the micropolitics and micro-economies of human relationships and creative labor."[126] In a later comment on the 2008 statement, then Chto Delat member David Riff discussed the point against totalization in terms of residual and emergent elements, and of a multiplicity of capitalisms:

> It is as if we see many different capitalisms all comxpeting with one another, and miraculously working together to raise the productivity of the system as whole. At the same time, there are nooks and crannies where atavisms thrive, places that global capital leaves aside, only to capture them later on, or zones that it develops, fixes, and abandons. We need to work in these "interstices" once capital flees to re-imagine what Marx meant when he says that every old society is pregnant with a new one.[127]

Riff's reference to atavisms in the context of prefigurative practice (the old society being pregnant with the new one) is suggestive. The residual and the emergent may not always be neatly separate; indigenist practices in contemporary activism and art, in particular, trouble this distinction.

Indigenist Divergences

In James Clifford's words, "Indigenous people have emerged from history's blind spot," having refused to follow the script that pre-ordained their disappearance.[128] In his book dedicated to the indigenous renaissance, Clifford references Raymond Williams's account of the "'dominant, residual, and emergent' elements in any conjuncture" as factors that "do not necessarily form a coherent narrative in which the residual indexes the past, and the emergent the future. […] Yet many forms of religious practice today – the global reach of Pentecostalism comes to mind – can be considered both residual and emergent. The same can be said of indigenous social and cultural movements that reach 'backward' in order to move 'ahead.'"[129] From Chiapas to Standing Rock, contemporary indigenism is indeed not so easily mapped onto Williams's sequence.

Indigeneity has a significant presence in contemporary art, from the work of the Karabing Film Collective to the presentation of masks by Kwakwaka'wakw artist Beau Dick's at Documenta 14 in Kassel – and indeed to 2022's documenta fifteen. This edition of the quinquennial in Kassel was curated by the Indonesian collective ruangrupa under the sign of *lumbung,* an indigenous term for a collective rice barn, and which hosted Aboriginal artist Richard Bell's *Tent Embassy* as well as The Rojava Film Commune's *The Lonely Trees* (2017), a mesmerizing montage elderly people singing traditional Kurdish songs. Via the Arts Collaboratory network, the Mexican collective Cooperative Cráter Invertido also participated in documenta fifteen – its practice equally informed by autonomia and Zapatismo, its drawings blending graffiti, counterculture and Aztec elements.

To return briefly to Chto Delat: Their early work – roughly the ten years since the collective's founding in 2003 – was marked by a serious engagement with Marxism, with early Soviet Constructivism, and with Brecht, on the basis of an autonomist conception of cultural activism.[130] An early interest in "autonomous zones" later fed into an engagement with Zapatismo and the EZLN; "It is clear that the experience of Zapatismo poses a serious question about the possibility of political organization and autonomy, an experience which has in many ways been actualized by the Kurds' armed struggle as well."[131] Translations of Zapatista writings and collective work in Chiapas led to subsequent pedagogic projects, publications and exhibitions, and collective filmmaking; Godard's injunction to "make films politically" was translated as "making films zapatistically." Here, radical practice is indigenized via movements – in Chiapas and Rojava – that are themselves complex, syncretistic assemblages of Indigenous survivals, or survivances, and elements from modern political theory and tactics.

Third-Worldist and Indigenist elements were already strong in the post-'68 left, with European groups naming themselves after the Tupemaros, using names such as Indiani Metropolitani or Stadtindianer, or adopting tactics of urban guerrilla. Meanwhile, the Tricontinental movement organized by OSPAAAL in Cuba pushed for decolonization both in terms of the (armed) liberation of territories and of cultural sovereignty. Even while much of the art world is in thrall to a discourse on decolonization that revolves around representation, epistemology and cosmology, the antisystemic contestations of Chiapas and Rojava resonate on the pervasive margins. In 2021, a Zapatista delegation visited Europe, where it was hosted in art spaces and by various activist communities with a particular presence and resonance in the "territorial bases of counter-power" that exist in various cities, and in the countryside.[132] Walls in the autonomist stronghold of Friedrichshain in Berlin sported flyers calling for the defense of embattled squats as well as posters welcoming the Zapatista delegation. If its is questionable to what extent the networks of autonomist squats, communes or "zones à defendre" in Europe represent systemic – or antisystemic – alternative, some would argue precisely that focusing on interlinked autonomist pockets within "the West," is all too limiting, and that the contacts and alliances with indigenous and other anti-imperialist contestations in the Global South need to be taken into account. But is the situation of Chiapas – or Rojava – not a after all that of an island in the sea of capitalism? This problem not new, nor are the challenges of networking and federating initiatives to create an anticapitalist archipelago, from such major zones to smaller pockets in the West, such as the ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes and other "zones à defendre" (zones to defend). Such a project requires intercommunal organizing.[133]

The indigenous resurgence is a striking case of complementary and asymmetrical schismogenesis, with indigenous activists and artists drawing strength from defining their values in opposition to capitalist extractivism. Contemporary indigenism posits that

another world is possible and that the future is indigenous – chiming with Graeber and Wengrow's sense of the protean possibilities and plasticity of the social. Clifford's insistence that "Global capital and the state are active forces but not determining structures" forms a salutary counterpoint to totalizing conceptions of "the system"[134] Perhaps this needs to be thought of in terms of degrees. These forces can act as pretty determining structures in some parts of the world, for some people: Real abstraction is an operational force with real agency but an uneven reach.[135] To what extent are divergent forms of life possible in and against the structures that have globalized the world? How can contemporary forms of asymmetrical schismogenesis maintain or produce forms of life in opposition to financialized and racialized capitalism?

If many in the West have the sense that the world is coming to an end, it is very much their world that is ending; other worlds were invaded and ripped apart long ago, yet the peoples in question refused to disappear – or, as with the Creole populations of the Caribbean, they became an *unprecedented people* spanning several aboriginal pasts, a resilient present and uncertain futures. In Indigenous futurism, as in Afrofuturism, futurity is wrested from conventional Western teleologies.[136] This raises the issue of what Yuk Hui terms technodiversity – "thinking about divergences within technological development […] to produce alternative technologies."[137] As Hui suggests, it is crucial to ask "what futures are still available for imagination and realization. If we identify Enlightenment thought with modern technology as an irreversible process guided by universality and rationality, then the only question that remains to be asked is: To be or not to be? But if we affirm that multiple cosmotechnics exist, and that these may allow us to transcend the limit of sheer rationality, then we can find a way out of never-ending modernity and the disasters that have accompanied it."[138]

Politicians such as Starmer in the UK, Macron in France or the likes of Biden and Harris in the US attempt to reaffirm liberal capitalism against illiberal democracies and autocracies. As the extractivist machine keeps accelerating, all Green New Deals

notwithstanding, conflicts will nonetheless continue to intensify. Some on the left drool about the prospect of a new War Communism in response to the urgency of planetary collapse. As in the case of WWI, when Otto Neurath theorized the war economy as inaugurating the transition to socialism, today's advocates of planning see potential in crisis and catastrophe. The promotors of Platform Socialism are fantasizing about Amazon and Walmart as incubators of planning 2.0 courtesy of AI. Tellingly, these theorists largely dispense with discussing workers' agency and self-organization, dissociating historical debates on socialist planning from those about the council-form.[139] This is not to say that all historical forms and concepts are to be abandoned like so much dead weight. Shorn of fetishization and reification, they can erupt into the present and open up lines of inquiry that may become lines of flight. One such form is that of the international.

Endnotes

1 Sandro Mezzadra, "Deserting the War," in *transversal texts*, March 2022, https://transversal.at/transversal/0422/mezzadra/en

2 Of central importance here are the Frankfurt School, specifically Friedrich Pollock, and the Johnson–Forest Tendency with Raya Dunayevskaya and C.L.R. James. See Pollock, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations" (1941), in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1990), pp. 71–94; Dunayeskaya, "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Is a Capitalist Society" (1941), https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/works/1941/ussr-capitalist.htm; James (in collaboration with Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee), *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950; Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1986).

3 See for instance a headline in the *WAZ* newspaper, March 14, 2022: https://www.waz.de/kultur/fernsehen/wettkampf-der-systeme-usa-und-china-im-vergleich-id234801177.html

4 Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton/London: Princeton University Press, 2000).

5 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 126.

6 Williams, *Marxism and Literature* p. 126.

7 Williams, *Marxism and Literature* pp. 128, 132.

8 On contemporaneity and/as co-temporality, see Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), esp. p. 17; Terry Smith, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 254–255.

9 Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010; 2017 edition with a new preface), p. 35

10 Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, p. 36.

11 Joseph Vogl, "The Ascendancy of Finance," *Artforum* 55, no. 10 (Summer 2017), p. 332.

12 Joshua Clover, "The Rise and Fall of Biopolitics: A Response to Bruno Latour," *Critical Inquiry* blog, March 29, 2020, https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/03/29/the-rise-and-fall-of-biopolitics-a-response-to-bruno-latour/

13 Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London/New York: Verso, 2014), p. 15.

14 See for instance the *e–flux journal* reader, *The Internet Does Not Exist* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015).

15 Bruce Sterling, *Islands in the Net* (New York: William Morrow/Arbor House, 1988).

16 See the two models of Sealand using Stephenson's *Cryptnomicon* and Negri/Hardt's *Empire* in Metahaven, *Uncorporate Identity* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010), pp. 68, 84–85. Other such models use More's *Utopia* and Deleuze/Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus.*

17 Unfortunately, as they've updated their references from Hardt/Negri and Mike Davis to contemporary theory performers such as Benjamin Bratton and Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, Metahaven have also largely abandoned their interventionist use of graphic design and branding whilst rebranding themselves as Filmmakers – which has resulted in an increasingly dismal series of films and video installations that use a kitschified sub-Tarkovskyan aesthetic and with voice-over snippets by their trendy theorists. Metahaven's designy art or arty design has itself become little more than a dismal symptom of actually existing globalization. Or, as Ana Teixeira Pinto puts it: "precariousness [or the "planetary instability" of our collapsing world order] is not challenged politically; rather, it is rendered lurid and recuperated into a libidinal economy." Ana Teixeira Pinto, "Tuned to an Undead Channel," in Metahaven and Karen Archey (eds.), *PSYOP: An Anthology* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 2018), p. 75.

18 James Grimmelmann, "Death of a Data Haven: Cypherpunks, WikiLeaks, and the World's Smallest Nation," in *Ars Technica*, March 28, 2012, https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2012/03/sealand-and-havenco/4/

19 Bruce Sterling, *Islands in the Net* (New York: William Morrow/Arbor House, 1988).

20 James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual: Mastering the Transition to the Information Age* (New York: Simon & Shuster/Touchstone, 1997), p. 99. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun likewise foregrounds the importance of *The Sovereign Individual,* with an emphasis on the book's perpetuation and exacerbation of structural racism through its denial, in *Discriminating Data: Correlation, Neighborhoods, and the New Politics of Recognition* (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press, 2021), pp. 11–12.

Unsurprisingly, the book is popular in contemporary crypto circles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUm401agDv8&ab_channel=EduardoLima

21 Davidson and Rees-Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual*, p. 90.

22 Davidson and Rees-Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual*, p. 29.

23 Quinn Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy* (London etc.: Penguin, 2023).

24 Davidson and Rees-Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual*, p. 30. On Techno-feudalism, see Geert Lovink, "Cloud Capital and Platform Regression: Review of Yanis Varoufakis, *Technofeudalism*," institute of network cultures, March 22, 2024, https://networkcultures.org/geert/2024/03/22/cloud-capital-and-platform-regression-review-of-janis-varoufakis-techno-feudalism/

25 Davidson and Rees-Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual*, pp. 28, 18, 20.

26 See Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life* (London/New York: Verso, 2017), pp. 115–181.

27 Anil Dash, "NFTs Weren't Supposed to End Like This," in *The Atlantic*, April 2, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/04/nfts-werent-supposed-end-like/618488/

28 "Company that builds 'floating islands' offers $100,000 bounty to any takers," in *The Guardian*, June 18, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/28/company-that-builds-floating-islands-offers-100000-bounty-to-any-takers

29 Olivier Jutel, "Blockchain Imperialism in the Pacific," *Big Data & Society, February 18, 2021,* https://journals-sagepub-com.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/doi/epub/10.1177/2053951720985249

30 Isabelle Simpson, "The Crypto-Secessionists: Islands as Fintech Laboratories," *Cabinet*, March 10, 2022, https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/kiosk/simpson_isabelle_10_march_2022.php

31 Foucault, Michel: *"Society Must Be Defended":* Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism,* pp. 208-212. *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 25.

32 Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, p. 60.

33 Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty,* p. 61

34 Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty,* p. 63

35 See for instance Lizzy Buchan, "Brexit: Jacob Rees-Mogg Defends Ireland Move by City Form He Co-founded Ahead of EU Withdrawal," in *The Independent*, June 14, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-jacob-rees-mogg-scm-ireland-city-move-eu-withdrawal-dublin-a8398041.html

36 Douglas Rushkoff, "The Super-Rich "Preppers" Planning to Save Themselves from the Apocalypse," in *The Guardian*, September 4, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/sep/04/super-rich-prepper-bunkers-apocalypse-survival-richest-rushkoff

37 Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics,* trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019) p. 67.

38 Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London/New York: Verso, 2000).

39 Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of* Assembly (Cambridge MA/London, 2015), pp. 4–5.

40 On differential inclusion, see Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London/New York: Verso, 2019), p. 133.

41 Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 46.

42 Rancière, *Dissensus,* p. 197.

43 Georges Didi-Huberman, "To Render Sensible," in Alain Badiou et al., *What Is a People?,* trans. Jody Gladding (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 66.

44 Rancière, *Dissensus,* p. 47.

45 There are, of course, precedents for this, for instance in the German *Lebensreform* movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, or indeed in fascism.

46 This has certainly been true in the Netherlands, with Pim Fortuyn (murdered in 2002) being an outspoken gay Islam-basher. Fortuyn's main successor as far-right demagogue, Geert Wilders, continued the attacks on Islam for being homophobic.

47 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), VII, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch07.htm On the other hand, in Marx's native Germany, since the late 19th century the terms *bürgerlich* and *Bürgerlichkeit* and associated virtues such as *Bildung* have held an aspirational meaning that has to some extent (though of course not fully) untethered them from economic indicators. Bürgerlich has thus come to have different connotations from *bourgeois*, holding greater ideological sway.

48 Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 20.

49 Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" (1973), in *Culture and Materialism* London/New York: Verso, 1980; 2005), p. 40.

50 For this usage, see for instance Selma James, "Sex, Race, and Class" (1974), in *Sex, Race, And Class – The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1951-2011* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), pp. 97, 100; Sheila Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement & Organizing for Socialism" (1979), in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments : Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (1979; Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2013), p. 181 etc.

51 James, "Sex, Race, and Class," p. 96.

52 James, "Sex, Race, and Class," pp. 98, 99.

53 Andrea Fraser, "Toward a Reflexive Resistance," *X-TRA* 0, no. 2, Winter 2018, available at http://x-traonline.org/article/artist-writes-no-2-toward-a-reflexive-resistance/

54 Lazzarato's Tarde is the author of a Leibniz-inspired social monadology, a "microsociology" that refuses to hypostatize society as a whole and has no truck with Hegelian or Marxist notions of the (dialectical, historical) subject, instead opening up onto a multiplicity of (trans)subjectivations and relations. More concretely, Lazzarato has sought to marshal Tardean concepts such as imitation to conceptualize "the mode of the cooperation of the multitude" in post-Fordism. For the latter, see Maurizio Lazzarato, "From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life," trans. Valerie Fournier, Akseli Virtanen and Jussi Vähämäki, in *Ephemera* 4 (2004), no. 3, pp. 187–208.

55 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Vol. 2*, trans. Brian Massumi (1980; London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 255.

56 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 253.

57 Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Clews Parsons (New York: Henry Holt, 1903), Preface to the Second Edition, p. xiv

58 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 219.

59 Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation,* p. xviii

60 Gabriel Tarde, "Le Public et la foule" (1898), in *L'Opinion et la foule* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1901), pp. 48–49, pp. 56–57. Today, as the dialectic of crowds and print publics has given way to one of crowds and networks, parliaments are stormed by mobs that organized on Facebook and Telegram. Just like Tarde's print publics, today's networks have great criminal potential. And does this becoming-criminal begin when the network materializes as a physical mob, or before?

61 "Anger and Hate Is the Easiest Way to Grow on Facebook," in *Irish Times*, October 25, 2021, https://www.irishtimes.com/business/technology/anger-and-hate-easiest-way-to-grow-on-facebook-sayswhistleblower-1.4710204. While popular monocausal explanations that blame social phenomena on "the media" or "technology" are obviously to be rejected, the design features of capitalist social-media platforms do indeed breed molecular modifications while facilitating some forms of conscious organizing more than others. The filter bubbles of QAnon and "virus truthers" produce "calculated publics" in which the "algorithmic presentation of publics back to themselves shape a public's sense of itself." See Tarleton Gillespie, "The Relevance of Algorithms, "in: Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo. J. Boczkowski and Kirsten A. Foot (eds.), *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society* (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press) 2014), pp. 167–194.

62 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* pp. 20–21.

63 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 22.

64 See Gregory Bateson, "Bali: The Value System of a Steady State" (1949), in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 107–127.

65 Matei Candea, "Revisiting Tarde's House," in *The Social After Gabriel Tarde: Debates and A*ssessments (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 20 (note 10).

66 Gregory Bateson, *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 171–197.

Bateson had first presented the concept in the 1935 article "Culture Contact and Schismogenesis," included in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, pp. 61–72.

67 Gregory Bateson, "Bali: The Value System of a Steady State" (1949), in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, p. 112.

68 Bateson, "Bali: The Value System of a Steady State," pp. 113, 115.

69 Bateson, *Naven,* p. 184.

70 Bateson, *Naven,* p. 186.

71 See the 1958 epilogue in Bateson, *Naven,* pp. 280–303.

72 Rodrigo Nunes, *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal: A Theory of Political Organisation* (London/New York: Verso, 2021), p. 63.

73 Gregory Bateson, "Culture contact and Schismogenesis," p. 68, quoted by Nunes, *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal,* p. 63.

74 "Clastres judiciously opposes the verticalizing and centripetal dynamics – differentiation by complementary schismogenesis, as Bateson would say – of the Chibcha, Aruaque and Carib peoples of this zone, to the horizontalizing and centrifugal dynamics – i.e. by symmetrical schismogenesis – which motivates the Tupi-Guarani people, hostile to social stratification." Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Politique des multiplicités : Pierre Clastres face à l'état* (Paris: Ed. Dehors, 2019), p. 88. Author's translation.

75 Pierre Clastres, *La Société contre l'Etat* (Paris: Minuit, 1974).

76 David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Pricky Paradigm Press, 2004), pp. 22–24.

77 David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity (*London etc: Allen Lane, 2021), p. 57. The motif of schismogenesis also shows up in some previous work by Graeber, such as the "Theses on Kingship" coauthored with Marshall Sahlins, which introduce the line of inquiry pursued in *The Dawn of Everything.* See David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins, On Kings (Chicago: Hau Books, s.d. [2017]), pp. 1–22, esp. p. 21.

78 Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, pp. 27–77.

79 For a specific case of architectural schismogenesis under conditions of settler colonialism in Palestine-Israel, see Gabriel Schwake, "Red Pitched Roofs: A (Post)Colonial Genealogy of Architectural Identity in the Jerusalem Area," in *Jerusalem Quarterly* no. 93 (Autumn 2023), https://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jq-articles/Red%20Pitched%20Roofs%20-%20A%20%28Post%29Colonial%20Genealogy%20of%20Architectural%20Identity%20in%20the%20Jerusalem%20Area.pdf

80 Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, p. 449–450.

81 Graeber and Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything*, p. 231.

82 For cautioning remarks about the dangers of disregarding "collective struggle by actual minorities" in favour of "creative minorities yet to come," see Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 71.

83 Isabelle Stengers, "Comparison as a Matter of Concern," in *Common Knowledge* 17, No. 1 (Winter 2011), p. 59.

84 See also Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism,* trans. Andrew Goffey (Lüneburg: Open Humanities Press/Meson Press, 2015), pp. 23–24

85 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 239.

86 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe: minor compositions, 2013), p. 64.

87 John Narayan, "Huey P. Newton's Intercommunalism: An Unacknowledged Theory of Empire," in *Theory, Culture & Society* 36 (2019), no. 3, pp. 1–2.

88 In general, patterns of misogynist violence in the Black Panther Party must be addressed as part of an overall reassessment of the movement's strengths and shortcomings.

89 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 336.

90 Huey P. Newton, "Intercommunalism" (1974), in *Viewpoint Magazine*, June 11, 2018, https://viewpointmag.com/2018/06/11/intercommunalism-1974/

An early lecture by Newton on Intercommunalism was published in *The Black Panther* V, no. 30, January 23, 1971. The paper would soon to change its subtitle from *Black Community News Service* to *Intercommunal News Service.*

91 Newton, "Intercommunalism."

92 Newton, "Intercommunalism."

93 "One might charge then that, by asserting authority over all "national" chapters, Newton was falling into the very belief in the bounds and borders of the nation-state that he had fundamentally criticized through

his theory of intercommunalism." Delio Vásquez, "Intercommunalism: The Late Theorizations of Huey P. Newton, 'Chief Theoretician' of the Black Panther Party," in *Viewpoint Magazine,* June 11, 2018, https://viewpointmag.com/2018/06/11/intercommunalism-the-late-theorizations-of-huey-p-newton-chief-theoretician-of-the-black-panther-party/

94 Newton, "Intercommunalism."

95 See Jared Leighton, "'All of Us Are Unapprehended Felons': Gay Liberation, the Black Panther Party, and Intercommunal Efforts Against Police Brutality in the Bay Area," *Journal of Social History* 52 no. 3 (2019), pp. 860–885.

96 Newton, "Intercommunalism."

97 Janet Sarbanes, *Letters on the Autonomy Project* (n.p.: Punctum Books, 2022), pp. 51–58.

98 Narayan, "Huey P. Newton's Intercommunalism," pp. 15, 18.

99 Quoted in Narayan, "Huey P. Newton's Intercommunalism," p. 16.

100 Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism.*, pp. 39-59.

101 Hardt and Negri read Newton's anti-identitarianism as "the basis of Paul Gilroy's efforts to shift the discourse of black politics toward an abolition of race." Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, pp. 336.

102 Here I am combining elements from statements by both Jameson and Hall in "Interview with Stuart Hall" (1990), in *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism,* ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 120. This conversation originally appeared in the September 1990 issue of *Marxism Today* under the telling title *Clinging to the Fragments.*

103 Jameson in "Interview with Stuart Hall," p. 114. For Jameson's Williams-derived notion of postmodernism as "cultural dominant," see *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 6.

104 Hall in "Interview with Stuart Hall," p. 116.

105 See the second and definitive edition of the conference volume edited by Anthony D. King, *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

106 Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,' in King, *Culture, Globalization and the World-System,* pp. 32, 34.

107 Hall in "Interview with Stuart Hall," p. 118.

108 Hall in "Interview with Stuart Hall," p. 118.

109 Hall, "The Local and the Global," p. 34.

110 Sylvia Wynter, "In Quest of Matthew Bondsman: Some Cultural Notes on the Jamesian Journey," in *Urgent Tasks* no. 12 (Summer 1981), http://www.sojournertruth.net/matthewbondsman.html

If French-Caribbean writers such as Césaire and Fanon clearly reacted against Kojève's influential reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* there is little to no evidence that James was familiar with Kojève. In his 1946 comments in the master-slave dialectic he takes cues from Lenin instead and treats the "lordship and bondage" dialectic as pertaining to a pre-capitalist past. See J.R. Johnson [C.L.R. James], "From the Master-Slave Dialectic to Revolt in Capitalist Production," extract from "Historical Retrogression or Socialist Revolution" in *New International* 12, no. 1 (January 1946), https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1946/master-slave.htm

111 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 220.

112 Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy*, p. 167. See also, more broadly, pp. 163–170 of Jones's important study.

113 Carla Lonzi, Let's Spit on Hegel, trans. Veronica Newman, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc849e8c2ff615809f5d3a7/t/5ccd694471c10b7dac249e0f/1556965705039/Lets-Spit-on-Hegel-Carla-Lonzi.pdf, pp. 6, 18. On Lonzi, see also Franceso Ventrella and Giovanna Zapperi (eds.), *Feminism and Art in Postwar Italy: The Legacy of Carla Lonzi* (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2020).

114 Lonzi, *Let's Spit on Hegel*, p. 18. See also Sarbanes, *Letters on the Autonomy Project*, pp. 43–50.

115 "Socialism is man's *positive self-consciousness,* no longer mediated through the abolition of religion, just as *real life* is man's positive reality, no longer mediated through the abolition of private property, through *communism.* Communism is the position as the negation of the negation, and is hence the *actual* phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation and rehabilitation. *Communism* is the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism as such is not the goal of human development, the form of human society." It should be noted that Marx's use of the terms socialism and communism here differs significantly from later usage. Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/comm.htm. On Marx's discussion in the 1844 Manuscripts of communism as a mediation to be superseded, see also Chris Arthur, "Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx and Negativity," in *Radical Philosophy* no. 35 (Autumn 1983), pp. 10–19.

116 See Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. xii, 33, 62.

117 Isabelle Fremeaux and Jay Jordan, *We Are "Nature" Defending Itself: Entangling Art, Activism and Autonomous Zones* (London: Pluto Press, 2021), p. 43.

118 Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London/New York: Verso, 2009), p. 26.

119 A case in point is the 2023-24 debate between Göran Therborn and Oliver Eagleton on the pages of the *New Left Review.*

120 Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism," in *New Left Review* no. 86 (March-April 2014), p. 66.

121 The diagram was originally devised by Community Economies Collective in 2001 and drawn by Ken Byrne. See J.K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Minneapolis 2006, p. 70.

122 Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives of Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

123 The German phrase *Menschen mit Nazihintergrund* was proposed as an ironical variation on the phrase *mit Migrationshintergrund*; see for instance Michael Rothberg, "'People with a Nazi Background': Race, Memory, and Responsibility," in *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 20, 2021, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/people-with-a-nazi-background-race-memory-and-responsibility/ The term has been applied to prominent art collector Julia Stoschek.

124 https://artreview.com/artist/ebony-l-haynes/?year=2021

125 For example through the decolonial "institutional liberation" espoused by New York-based art collectives such as MLT+/Decolonize this Place and Not an Alternative, which have taken aim at major museums such as the Whitney and MoMA.

126 Chto Delat, "A Declaration on Knowledge, Politics, and Art" (2008), with comments by Dmitry Vilensky and David Riff (2010), in the newspaper *Chto Delat? What Is to Be Done? in Dialogue [reader]*, 2010, p. 2

127 Comment by David Riff in Chto Delat, "A Declaration on Knowledge, Politics, and Art," p. 2.

128 James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 13.

129 Clifford, *Returns*, p. 28.

130 The second issue of the *Chto Delat* newspaper was titled "Autonomy Zones" (2003).

131 Dmitry Vilensky (Chto Delat), "Unlearning in Order to Learn," in Alessandra Pomarico and Nikolay Oleynikov (eds.), *When the Roots Start Moving. First Mouvement: To Navigate Backward/Resonating with Zapatismo* (Berlin/Milano: Archive Books, 2001), p. 65. Unfortunately, in the context of the war in Gaza, Germany-based members of Chto Delat showed themselves to be social-media trolls in the service of the McCarthyite German campaign against any and all criticism of Israel.

132 See interview with Ramor Ryan, "Zapatismo, Solidarity and Self-Governance: A Conversation," in *ROAR*, March 23, 2022, https://roarmag.org/essays/ramor-ryan-interview/

133 On historical debates among anarchists in the wake of the Paris Commune, on creating federations of cooperatives so as to prevent them from becoming isolated islands, see Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 117-142. Léon Lambert argues that the Commune already installed a form of "archipelagic sovereignty" linking up autonomous islands, and potentially stretching beyond Paris to include "rural islands." See Léopold Lambert, "The Paris Commune and the World: Introduction," *The Funambulist* no. 34 (March/April 2021), p. 13.

134 Clifford, *Returns*, p. 37.

135 See my *Objections: Forms of Abstraction, volume 1* (London: Sternberg Press, 2022).

136 See Grace Dillon and Pedro Neves Marques, "Taking the Fiction Out of Science Fiction: A Conversation about Indigenous Futurisms," in *e-flux journal* no. 120 (September 2021), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/120/417043/taking-the-fiction-out-of-science-fiction-a-conversation-about-indigenous-futurisms/

137 "Yuk Hui: From the Universality of Progress to Cosmotechnics," in *Autonomies*, September 23, 2021, https://autonomies.org/2021/09/yuk-hui-from-the-universality-of-progress-to-cosmotechnics/

138 Yuk Hui, "Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics," in e-flux journal no. 86 (November 2017), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/

139 See also Sven Lütticken, "Plan and Council: Genealogies of Calculation, Organization, and Transvaluation," in *Grey Room* no. 91 (Spring 2023), pp. 92–127.

Transnational Trajectories

Leftist internationalism has always been parasitical. Using the infrastructures of capitalist modernity, it attempts to subvert them while preparing their appropriation. The specter of the International once again raises its head in today's context of crumbling or surging empires within what Hardt and Negri theorized as Empire – or the specter of the Transnational. Whereas the notion of the International might still be said to affirm the primacy of the nation state, that of the Transnational accords primacy to the movement across borders. As Jonas Staal puts it:

> while the Comintern was brutally weaponized, the lack of a Transnationale today shows its disastrous consequences: authoritarian-capitalist states pursuing aggressive foreign policies dominate transnational trade and military agreements, and subsidize corporate actors that disproportionately influence our political and economic life. This leads to terrifying situations in which the Rojavans, who bravely fought and sacrificed to protect their multiethnic and multireligious region in North-Syria against the Islamic State while establishing their own feminist democracy in the process, are forced to ask support from the Trump regime as the Erdoğan dictatorship threatens with their massacre. As Kurdish Women's Movement activist and thinker Dilar

> Dirik argued, that would be the moment to call upon a 'Left Air Brigade' – but in the post-Comintern world, there is no such thing.[1]

If we are "lacking a Comintern" in the fight against the Fascist Transnational and against the neoliberal capitalism that spawned it, then what could such an anti-fascist and anti-capitalist International or Transnational (or, as I will argue, *Terrestrial*) look like? Is any speculation on that point bound to be frivolous, a mere pipe dream of armchair Leninists? Thinking through the international to come as an *unrealistic necessity* can help us take stock of possibilities and impossibilities, obstacles to contend with and potentialities to tangle with.

The reference to Staal, an "organizational artist," suggests that while my focus here is certainly not on the kind of "international contemporary art" that travels from art fair to freeport, there is an aesthetic dimension to this inquiry. While I do highlight a few exhibitions and artworks, my argument is synoptic and cannot proceed through in-depth discussions of specific practices; sometimes these speak more through their visual presence, as semi-autonomous illustrations, than through my writing. As before, however, my exercise in theoretical and political sense-making is grounded in ways of sensing, and comes with a focus on social and organizational *form* – on articulations and mutations of social relations, as manifested in organigrams and schemas, in decision-making structures and physical assemblies.

The classic, cartoonish opposition here is between the vertical Leninist Party meeting in an orderly plenum on the one hand, and the anarchist or autonomist assembly on the other. In opposition to the salespeople of salvation, of various kinds, I start from a sense of failure, from the inadequacy of all forms when reified and posited as ideal – or just as remotely adequate. This should not be taken for a left-pessimist Adornianism, however. The point of diagnosing failure is to find use value in the wreckage, to repurpose the remains. The Palais Idéal is constructed from rubble.

Globalization from Below

Benedict Anderson has done much to trace anticolonial networks and itineraries within the infrastructures of empire in the late nineteenth century – focusing on the crumbling Spanish colonial empire and on various anarchist and/or nationalist political and literary radicals, ranging from the Cuban creole anarchist Tarrisa de Marmol, who published articles against Spanish colonial repression in Fénéon's *La Revue Blanche*, to the Filipino author José Rizal, who studied in the capitals of Europe, published two novels, and was executed by the Philippines' colonial regime. If the nineteenth century was marked by the development of a "world market" bringing about a "universal interdependence of nations," as the *Communist Manifesto* put it, Anderson has argued that the "inter-state world system of 1860-1890" saw the emergence of a "second world": that of the "global Left."[2] What this amounted to was a "globalization from below," as Kristin Ross argues in her account of Commune refugees' movements and interactions in Europe during the 1870s and 1880s.[3]

In the early 1870s, two events would have profound repercussions on subsequent genealogies of inter- and transnationalism: the Paris Commune and its brutal suppression in the spring of 1871, and the Hague congress of the International Workingmen's Association in September 1872. One major factor that contributed to the split in the International was, curiously enough, a*greement*: the universal consensus, from Marx to Bakunin, on the importance of the Paris Commune. The anarchist Elisée Reclus later claimed that the overturning of the Vendôme Column by Courbet and other Communards showed that the International's ideals had become "a living reality," yet it was precisely this intense focus on the Commune that brought fundamental differences to the fore.[4] For Marx, the Commune was a nucleus of a future communist society, but its suppression had shown the weakness of prefigurative politics in the face of the state apparatus; hence the need to fight for the control over the state, *before* its later dissolution. Bakunin, on the other

hand, regarded the Commune as a concrete model for anarchism in practice. In different ways, both the Marxists and the anarchists grappled with what could be termed the transition problem: *how* to effectively move towards the desired future society on which there was, broadly speaking, agreement.

In their preparatory statement for the congress, *Fictitious Splits in the International,* Marx and Engels asserted that all socialists could subscribe to anarchism as the ultimate goal: "Once the aim of the proletarian movement – i.e., abolition of classes – is attained, the power of the state, which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions."[5] By contrast, they continued, Bakunin's own alliance within the international "proclaims anarchy in proletarian ranks as the most infallible means of breaking the powerful concentration of social and political forces in the hands of the exploiters. Under this pretext, it asks the International, at a time when the Old World is seeking a way of crushing it, to replace its organization with anarchy."[6] Theoretical differences were compounded by incompatible organizational practices. There is a long history of anarchist Marx-bashing that puts him in the corner of authoritarianism, with Bakunin as his libertarian counterpart. In practice, however, Bakunin was a grotesque throwback to the plotting, scheming, conspiratorial kind of revolutionary, appropriating right-wing conspiracist fantasies both for the purposes of self-aggrandizement (there was always a more secret order or directorate into which Bakunin could initiate you) and discrediting Marx in vituperative antisemitic attacks (alleging that the international had been taking over by a cabal of Jews in thrall to "their dictator-Messiah, Marx").[7]

How to make sure that the revolution was to initiate not just a takeover of the means of production but a qualitative leap in productive and social relations? It is true that Marx was not given to reflecting on the problem of perpetuating conventional organizational forms. This is where the 1871 circular by the

Jura Federation, quoted in chapter 2, packs a punch: "How can we expect an egalitarian and free society to emerge from an authoritarian organization? Impossible."[8] But exactly when does an organization qualify as authoritarian? Bakunin's aim "to ensure the Freedom of the sovereign individual Ego" meant that his own ego and power ran unchecked. Whereas Marx valued democratic protocol, "Bakuninism in operation meant the imposition of its own authority in autocratic forms: the establishment of a special sort of despotism by a self-appointed elite who refused to call their dictatorship a 'state.'"[9] Furthermore, as *The Fictitious Splits in the International* rightly noted, Bakunin undermined the project of international solidarity by relapsing into an essentialization of races and the rhetoric of race war. Projecting his own Plan-Slavist racism onto Marx, Bakunin presented the latter as a Jewish Pan-Germanist in league with Bismarck.

The Marx/Bakunin split, which was not quite as "fictitious" as Marx made it out to be, resulted in diverging genealogies of internationalism. The 1880s and 1890s would be dominated by anarchism: When Marxists founded the Second International at the Paris Congress in 1889 – though the organization would not be formalized until 1900 – this new international was forced to situate itself against what could be called the decentralized, networked international of anarchism. In a repressive environment, with various national police forces on guard, there were advantages to decentralization. The anarchist focus on direct action over byzantine theorizations of capitalism appealed to many, from criminals like Ravachol to aesthetes such as Félix Fénéon and some of the post-impressionist painters associated with him (Signac, Pissarro). Since there was less distrust of such artists in anarchist than in communist circles, the aesthetic and political avant-gardes could come together under the aegis of anarchist spontaneism and terrorist "propaganda by the deed." Fénéon, the dandy art critic, was suspected by the police of having bombed a café.[10] Furthermore, as Anderson notes, "the movement did not disdain peasants and agricultural laborers in an age when serious industrial proletariats

were mainly confined to Northern Europe," which meant that it not only had an advantage in Southern Europe, but also in the Global South – in the colonies.[11]

Hundreds of those Communards who survived the military massacre, including many anarchists, were exiled to the French colonies of Guiana and New Caledonia in the 1870s. Here, they met both natives and deported Algerian rebels. This did not necessarily lead to great anticolonial solidarity, and in some cases Communards were deployed by the state against indigenous uprisings. While the French Empire had a habit of shipping troublesome radicals around the globe to the Guantanamos of the day, not all displacements were forced. Bakunin himself had been a pioneer of anarchist globe-trotting, becoming a living embodiment of internationalism – commemorated in artist Andreas Siekmann's 1992-1995 project *Wir fahren für Bakunin* (We Drive for Bakunin), which proposed subverting the infrastructure of neoliberal globalization for an activist-artistic tour through the almost 260 cities where Bakunin had hung his hat at some point.[12]

Marx himself was active in providing relief to refugees in London, where Communards including the poets Verlaine and Rimbaud had taken refuge (and where Pissarro also lived, though he'd gotten out of France at the onset of the Franco-Prussian War). Ross stresses that the Commune was seen as "an audacious act of internationalism," as the *Revue Blanche* called it in 1897 – an act that had the potential to transform Paris from the capital of the French state/empire into an "autonomous collective in a universal federation of peoples."[13] As one hub in a constellation of such collectives across France and beyond, the Commune (had it been allowed to live) would have initiated a form of *archipelagic sovereignty*, in Léopold Lambert's Glissantian turn of phrase.[14] Ross shows that both the Communist William Morris and anarchists such as Elisée Reclus and the Russian Peter Kropotkin were aware of the dangers of isolated communes stranded in a capitalist world. However, whereas Morris subscribed to the Marxist point that it is therefore necessary to first abolish capitalism, Reclus and Kropotkin theorized archipelagic forms of cooperation and federation between communities.[15]

How to prevent the second world from remaining marginalized? How can its potential begin to actualize itself? How to turn globalization from below into an "antisystemic worldmaking project" – to use Adom Getachew's term for postwar decolonization – with repercussions beyond a few pockets here and there?[16] The networked anarchist international and the socialist Second International that was founded in 1889 were the two ill-fitting halves of that project. The Second International was itself not a centralized organization but rather a federation of national socialist parties and unions. While this means that it was clearly based in mass movements and could no longer very well be painted as a backroom conspiracy, the focus on national representative democracy in the end served to undermine it, with Bernstein's reformism being the inauguration of social democracy as we still (just about) know it. Social democracy regarded the nation state as a "neutral" institutional framework (rather than an

instrument of the bourgeoisie) that can be used for progressive purposes. This reorientation notwithstanding, the International maintained a commitment to internationalism, with the Russian and Japanese delegates – Plekhanov and Katayama – symbolically shaking hands during the 1904 Amsterdam conference, while the Russo-Japanese War was in full swing.[17]

With its plenary meetings taking place at the swanky Concertgebouw, and others in the Berlage-designed headquarters of the diamond workers' union, the 1904 conference showed how far the movement had some since the fractious 1872 conference in a cheap dive in The Hague. But the bourgeois trappings could not conceal that this was yet another moment of crisis – and a photo from the police archives identifying key delegates suggests that the authorities were jittery.[18] Holland had seen mass strikes in 1903, and unrest was brewing elsewhere; the Russian Revolution would break out in 1905. At this moment, the Marxist revolutionary wing in the Dutch party around Anton Pannekoek and the poets Herman Gorter and Henriette Roland Holst was strong. However, the Dutch opposed the French delegate Jaurès's defense of the *general strike* as an apocalyptic showdown shutting down every activity, instead substituting a more orderly notion of the *mass strike* backing specific demands.[19]

When the threat of war loomed large in 1912, the internationalist position was reaffirmed – only for the dominant social-democratic elements within the International to cave when World War I actually broke out in 1914, rallying behind the various war efforts. By 1915, the Second International was dead, with both the social democrats and the radicals around Lenin and Luxemburg departing. Lenin's Third International, or Comintern, would become a dominant force of the 1920s and 1930s, though it was always contested by alternative, non-Bolshevik forms – most importantly anarchist movements, but also the council-communist tendency represented by the likes of Pannekoek and Paul Mattick. Once again, the differences partly revolved around what was (at least nominally) universal agreement on one crucial point: the importance of councils. It was a truth (almost) universally acknowledged that councils were the nucleus of the coming society, and the early Soviet Union – literally: Council Union – was marked by the dialectic of dual power between the soviets and the Party. The Bolsheviks' suppression of the councils turned the state's name into an ideological sham, as anarchists and left-communists never tired of pointing out.[20]

Conspiracy and Race War

Even before the *Communist Manifesto,* political radicalism was associated in the reactionary imaginary with sinister international conspiracies. The French Revolution, culminating in the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, could not *possibly* have been the result of a complex and overdetermined chain of events, and clearly popular agency could not be credited as a historical force; it *had* to be the work of devious conspirators. In this context, eighteenth-century conspiracy theories about Jesuits, Freemasons and Bavarian Illuminati came in handy. Cagliostro's "revelations" about secret Illuminati guidance in the Revolution, the sensational potboiler *Tombeau de Jacques de Molay* (which traced a conspiracy going back to the Knights Templar), and Augustin de Barruel's *Mémoires pour servir à*

l'histoire du jacobinisme created a powerful narrative.[21] Reactionary and usually antisemitic conspiracy theories would accompany later internationals, from the days of Marx to the fascist crusade against both "Judeo-Bolshevism" and "Jewish plutocracy," echoed in our days by claims that the financier George Soros is behind Antifa and Black Lives Matter.[22] Jews were and are deemed to be behind *both* international finance capital *and* behind anarchism/communism. These are just different sides of the same conspiracy; depending on their own ideological profile, authors attacking the Jewish conspiracy may focus on one side or the other.

The First World War and the October Revolution were a shot in the arm for far-right conspiracy theories, with the antisemitism cranked up to the max. The boundaries between popular fiction and political discourse were fluid. Having been forged in Paris during the 1890s, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* had their greatest impact around this time.[23] In 1920, Henry Ford published the *Protocols* in an American edition, while Winston Churchill railed in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* that one could scarcely "exaggerate the part played in the creation of Bolshevism and in the actual bringing about of the Russian Revolution by these international and for the most part atheistical Jews."[24] Drawing a genealogical line from Marx via Rosa Luxemburg to Emma Goldman and Trotsky, Churchill traced this sinister global Jewish conspiracy back in time to the Illuminati and the French Revolution. Here, the revered British imperialist reveals his indebtedness to the older theories about the fall of the Ancien Régime, but of course his real interest lies closer to home: "In fact, they are the "mainspring of every subversive movement during the Nineteenth Century; and now at last this band of extraordinary personalities from the underworld of the great cities of Europe and America have gripped the Russian people by the hair of their heads."[25] In a classic case of karma, Nazi propaganda would come to depict Churchill himself as a puppet of the world-wide Jewish Conspiracy.[26]

Meanwhile, a different though related image had been gripping authors both on the left and right: that of the (international)

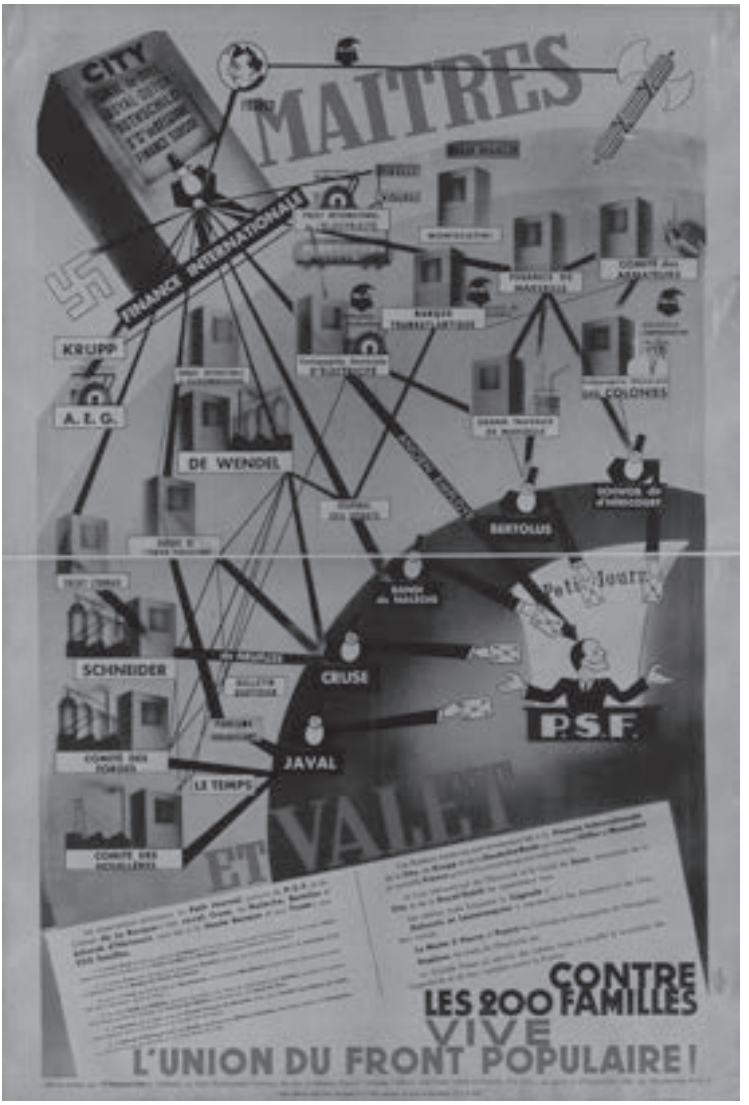
business conglomerate, or *trust.* The paradigmatic case was Rockefeller's Standard Oil, comprising many seemingly independent companies; such trusts were often depicted in the media as octopuses with their tentacles everywhere.[27] More sober-minded scholars drew up flow chart diagrams trying to make sense of the networks of interconnected companies. One such diagram, published in 1913 and showing Wilhelm Merton's Frankfurt-based Metallgesellschaft, fueled British fears of a German-Jewish conspiracy, resulting in alarmist press reports and the protectionist Non-Ferrous metal bill of 1918.[28] Lenin studied, copied, and modified that same 1913 diagram during his Swiss Exile in 1915.

As Daniel Damler has noted, Lenin added geographic names to indicate the headquarters of the various companies, turning the corporate chart into a map of imperialism.[29] For him, such international trusts were crucial symptoms of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. Imperialism, as defined by Lenin, is a product of finance capital, which "spreads its net over all countries of the world. An important role in this is played by banks founded in the colonies and by their branches. […] The capital-exporting countries have divided the world among themselves in the figurative sense of the term. But finance capital has led to the actual division of the world."[30] In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,* Lenin quotes the economist Heyman's analysis of trusts in terms of a "mother company" controlling "daughter companies" and "grandchild companies": "if holding 50 per cent of the capital is always sufficient to control a company, the head of the concern needs only one million to control eight million in the second subsidiaries."[31]

Were the Moscow-allied communist parties in other countries, under the umbrella of the Comintern, not in fact so many "daughter parties" and "grandchild parties"? C.L.R. James once suggested that "each of the three great workers' internationals [corresponded] in form to a particular stage of capitalism," and the Leninist Comintern was a quasi-corporate endeavor befitting the age of monopoly capitalism and imperialism.[32] However, the Comintern's position as an anti-capitalist counter-multinational was

in the end unsustainable if the Soviet Union remained the only socialist country – which is what happened, of course, following the failure of various European revolutions in 1918-20. Trotsky's permanent revolution sought to foster revolutions in other countries, but Stalin's doctrine of socialism in one country accepted that the Soviet Union was likely to be a singular case for the time being; thus the isolation problem returned on the larger scale of the state itself. The rise of fascism compounded the problem. Discussions on the *Einheitsfront* (United Front) versus the *Volksfront* (Popular Front) strategy traverse Weiss's *Aesthetics of Resistance*. The former was a more radical, offensive alliance with other forces and parties on the far left; the latter a pragmatic anti-fascist coalition with the social democrats and bourgeois-liberal parties, which crystallized somewhat fitfully during 1934 and was officially adopted by the Comintern the following year.[33]

In France, a prominent trope during the era of the Front Populaire government (1936-38) was that of *Les 200 familles*. This political myth derived from the fact that the general assembly of the Banque de France used to be constituted by the two hundred largest shareholders; this was generalized into the notion that 200 families pretty much controlled the entire economy of France.[34] Such a myth was obviously susceptible to antisemitic appropriation, which is not to say that it is unavoidably and intrinsically so.[35] The left used it in order to target an enemy (high finance) that appealed not only to workers but to a broader segment of society, with one Popular Front poster using this trope shows a network of corporations and wealthy entrepreneurs funneling money towards the right-wing PSF party.[36] This Comintern-backed diagram returns to Lenin's tracing of trusts during WWI, its trickle-down of influence and corruption from the "masters" (the financiers and industrialists) to the "valet" (the PSF politician) showing the failure of bourgeois democratic representation. But what about the Comintern's similarly hierarchic structure, with unacknowledged forms of control, with its "front organizations"? The Leninist-Stalinist Comintern mimicked the enemy all too well.



The antisemitic racialization of internationalism by reactionaries such as Churchill is no accident, nor is Bakunin's tendency to fold class war back into race war. As Foucault has argued, modern historical consciousness emerged though the trope of race war.

For the longest time, historical writing was power talking to itself: the history of sovereignty, in the service of sovereignty, glorifying the deeds of kings and the continuity of dynasties and empires.[37] In his 1975-76 lectures at the Collège de France, published as *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault presented an ambitious genealogical account of the emergence of what we would now think of as "history proper." In eighteenth-century France, authors from the milieu of the reactionary aristocracy developed a historical myth about the "barbarian" Celtic invasion of Gallo-Roman France as a weapon in a struggle against royal absolutism. For thinkers such as Boulainvilliers, the Franks – the Germanic invaders of Roman Gaul – were freedom-loving barbarians who liberated Gaul from Roman imperialism, thus becoming the true founders of France – whereas the modern French state represented a relapse into a foreign, Roman mode of government.[38] While Marxist historians have tended to identify the "rise of historical consciousness" with the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, culminating in the French Revolution, Foucault gleefully presents the reactionary French nobility as a crucial historical actor.[39]

Beyond France, Foucault goes back to seventeenth-century England, where Parliamentarians, Puritans, and Levelers painted the Norman Conquest as a fall from grace, idealizing a pre-Norman, Saxon society in which laws had been more just and the king's powers more circumscribed. The French and English scenarios are both "counter-histories" about warring races that introduce "new characters" as the real historical subjects: the Saxons, Normans, Gauls and Franks.[40] In England, however, the Norman invaders were seen not as liberators, but as oppressors who had subjugated a more egalitarian and just indigenous society. Against the new "historico-political discourse" of mid-seventeenth century England, Hobbes defended a conception of sovereignty that removes the question of legitimacy from the equation, and making the Conquest irrelevant.[41] He presents two scenarios for the founding of a state: You can either have a Commonwealth by institution (in which the subjects

choose their sovereign) or by acquisition (conquest).[42] In the end, it doesn't really matter; *same difference*, one might say. In the context of the seventeenth century, the idea that any European people could have chosen their sovereign was a strategic fiction that in fact gives all the power to the sovereign instead of the people, who are condemned to follow their sovereign "representative."[43] In any case, whether we are dealing with "acquisition" or "institution," the people are now tied to a sovereign (a king or some kind of committee) holding all the cards.

Intriguingly, Hobbes's scenario of "acquisition" provides a close parallel for Hegel's master-slave dialectic as interpreted by Kojève, and Foucault's retelling brings this parallel to the surface.[44] While Foucault dismisses Hegel as someone who performed an "authoritarian colonization" of historico-political discourse" by "[codifying] struggle, war, and confrontation into logic, or so-called logic, of contradiction," one should remember that Foucault's intellectual coming of age had coincided with the moment when the French reception of Hegel peaked, and he had close ties to a number of thinkers involved in this project.[45] In Hobbes, as read by Foucault, the primordial battle posited by Hegel-Kojève as the *beginning of* history becomes a battle *in* history, but the basic plot is the same: If the victors do not kill the vanquished but let them live, and the latter do not rebel, they thus renounce the risk of death and show "their preference for life and obedience."[46] Foucault here translates part of chapter 20 of *Leviathan* into the sound of Kojève and Bataille:

> It is therefore not the defeat that leads to the brutal and illegal establishment of a society based upon domination, slavery, and servitude; it is what happens during the defeat, or even after the battle, even after the defeat, and in a way, independently of it. It is fear, the renunciation of fear, and the renunciation of the risk of death. It is this that introduces us into the order of sovereignty and into a juridical regime: that of absolute power. The will to prefer life to death: that is what founds sovereignty [...]."[47]

The sovereign or master is born when the opponent chooses not to die and, following Kojève, becomes a slave; or, following Hobbes as read by Foucault, becomes the sovereign's subject. This dialectical scenario always carried latent racial connotations that could easily be foregrounded. If Enlightenment thought and the American and French Revolutions redefined sovereignty as popular sovereignty ("We, the people"), Romanticism re-racialized the concept of the people, making "historico-political discourse" hegemonic.[48] By the early nineteenth century, after Napoleon, the triumph of cultural nationalism meant that history was now indeed written as the history of nations grounded in races and their intermixing. It is not so much that "the history of sovereignty" was replaced by "history as race war" as that sovereignty itself was racialized – with a focus on barbarian invasions, *Völkerwanderungen* and racio-ethnico-cultural continuities across the centuries.[49]

Fluid specters such as the Nordic Race, the Germanic Race and the Latin Race populated the writings of historians and art historians; art was seen as a symptomatic manifestation of essential Germanness, Nordicness, Latinness, etc. In one of the most popular novels of the age, *Ivanhoe,* Walter Scott presented a beguiling mix of characters, but arguable the real protagonists were various races. In Scott's own words, the novel dealt with "the existence of the two races in the same country, the vanquished distinguished by their plain, homely, blunt manners, and the free spirit infused by their ancient institutions and laws; the victors, by the high spirit of military fame, personal adventure, and whatever could distinguish them as the Flower of Chivalry."[50] But those were the "civilized" races. While ostensibly focusing on the Saxons and Normans, in *Ivanhoe* Scott keeps returning to Jews and Black "Saracen slaves" as figures of the Other.

Although Foucault notes that the counter-history of race war fed into nineteenth-century biological racism, he tends to treat the latter as a fairly forgettable phenomenon, and has little to say about colonialism – though he does quote the striking assertion

by Adam Blackwood, in 1581, that "The Normans acted in England as people from Europe are now acting in America."[51] In the words of Sylvia Wynter, in a text that is virtually contemporaneous with Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended* lectures, one could charge Foucault with an "oversight of the Friday relation" – that is, the centrality of the relation between the colonizer and the colonized Other (Robinson Crusoe's Friday) to Western capitalism.[52] Delving into the history of the terms "ethnos" and "ethnic" and discussing Wallerstein's account of the emergence of the world economy (the capitalist world-economic system) in the sixteenth century, Wynter suggests that

> the X factor of this mutation was the discovery of the New World; that is, the discovery of vast areas of land which in becoming the frontier of what was then still primarily a Christian civilization, transformed that group of people and of states into what we today call the West […] The West became the We, and the people of the Periphery-states became the OTHER. But the point is that neither the We nor the Other now existed as autonomous entities. Both We and Other were now bound in a concrete relation, a hierarchical global relation."[53]

As Wynter argues, this "We" was defined by the ruling classes in relation to both (internally) ruled *classes* and (externally, and also internally) ruled *races*. The latter are among the unexpected (potential) subjects that have relegated to prehistory, to a state outside of any "proper" historical dialectic, but subjected to necropolitical racial warfare. Today, the keyboard warriors and terrorist thugs of the Fascist Transnational everywhere imagine themselves as sovereign subjects whose disregard for others is justified by the fact that they are the defenders of of the real sovereign that is the white race, possibly with some useful allies who are themselves trying to distance themselves from the mass of subalterns. Migration is seen through the prism of "replacement theory" – basically, barbarian invasions

masterminded by "Cultural Marxists." It's not just migrants but also women and the specter of LGBT "genderism" that can be used as a convenient enemy, and ultimately some phantom race of queer/black/Jewish "liberals" comes to take on the features of some alien invading race threatening "our way of life." Even within the nation state, some parts are more truly "of the people" than others. A weatherman acknowledging climate change on a TV station in Iowa received threatening messages telling him "go the hell back to where you came from DOUCHEBAG!!!"; two teachers speaking out against Nazi propaganda in schools in rural East Germany were told by a sticker campaign to "fuck off to Berlin."[54]

The internationals of the nineteenth and twentieth century proposed a different "cut" in the social continuum than that effected by the right: class struggle as opposed to race war. Today, the challenge is again to effect a different redistribution of the sensible, in social and political terms – a cut across social and racial divides that scrambles neofascist essentialism. This means that one also has to challenge the dominant social classifications of today, as opposed to becoming entrenched in some liberal or progressive sense of being "on the good side," which all too frequently leads to becoming the fascists' wet dream, rather than their worst nightmare. If progressiveness is not just a lifestyle and a form of distinction but an emancipatory project and open offer, then coalitions must be formed and alignments enacted.

Non-Alignment Pacts

In artistic and para-academic milieus, the notion of alignment is often invoked to indicate the need, but also the difficulty, of concatenating struggles and groups. As one publication asks: "Why should we be in solidarity? And why should we align?," followed by "How do we align the non-aligned today?"[55] The language is typical, and while such questions can be made productive, but the question of non-alignment is often seen through a problematically nostalgic lens.

Postwar decolonization was marked by forms of nationalism in conjunction with Pan-Africanism and other attempts to build alliances or federations against NATO and Warsaw Pact. Adom Getachew highlights the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945 and the 1955 Bandung Conference as crucial moments when anticolonial nationalism asserted the right to self-determination – to a true self-determination going beyond UN-approved forms of neocolonial dependency. The conference is a key event in The Otolith Group's essay-film, *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* (2013), which revolves around Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana – Nkrumah being a participant in the Bandung Conference – and more generally around African Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. The film features postage stamps from the mid-1960s, and the accompanying installation *Statecraft* collects many more. The postal system, as part of the infrastructure of imperialism bequeathed to the postwar world, is a Leitmotif in this body of work, which keeps any definitive historical assessment of the postwar postcolonial moment at bay.[56]

The Bandung Conference helped inaugurate the Non-Aligned Movement, which was formally founded in 1956 in Yugoslavia, and which in recent years has spawned a cultural cottage industry. Important works such as *The Year of the Quiet Sun* or Naeem Mohaiemen's three-channel video installation, *Three Meetings and a Funeral* (2017), with its elegiac musings on the conflicts that undermined the movement in the 1970s – have by now become integrated in a kind of theoretico-curatorial stew of non-alignment kitsch in the form of exhibitions, events, and publications. The attraction of the movement is clear in times with a notable shortage of alternatives, yet nostalgia often gets in the way of a serious reassessment of the organization's status as a product of decolonization under Cold War conditions.[57] What would indeed be key, as Uroš Pajović argues, is to "consider these various meetings [revisited in Mohaiemen's film] as a structure of potentialities to revisit, as a set of questions to retrieve and reactivate."[58]

As an alliance of states and leaders that that was largely determined negatively and strategically, the NAM always remained entangled in the logic of the Cold War, whose product it was. It thus comes as no surprise that the idea of a "non-bloc bloc" has been revided under neo-Cold War conditions – with vague pronouncements about representing the Global South providing ideological content and cover. The BRICS bloc is positioning itself as the contemporary version of the NAM – even though the old NAM organization still exists.[59] Recently expanded beyond the core of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, BRICS claim to non-alignment might seem shaky. Overlapping with the Eurasian SCO (with which it may well merge in the near future), the BRICS group offers Russia and China possibilities for empire building with a decolonial sheen, in the name of multi-polarity and national sovereignty. In some ways, the BRICS's pragmatic use of the language of non-alignment reflects the legacy of the NAM better than all art-world rhetoric. The question remains if and how the notion of non-alignment can be used to forge other kinds of alignments; engaging with particular histories may provide some pointers.

In the 1960s, Cuba organized what could be regarded as a radical NAM spin-off focusing on supporting (armed) liberation struggles; this was Cuban's non-aligned version of the permanent revolution strategy. The movement's debut was the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana, which had been prepared by an international committee chaired by the Moroccan revolutionary Ben Barka, who was "disappeared" by the French police (with Moroccan, Mossad, and possibly also CIA help) before the conference took place. Working with allies that also included Nkrumah and Amilcar Cabral, Cuba built on the existing Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Movement (AAPSO) to create the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), which would go on to publish the *Tricontinenal* bulletin, which "created a new kind of communicative space for those who considered themselves part of the revolutionary Third

World."[60] This included many allies in the New Left and the Student Movement. More than the statist Non-Aligned Movement, it was "the Tricontinental" (with poster boys such as Che Guevara) that many considered the real international of the era. On can speak of the "tricontinentalization" of the New Left.[61]

In Germany, the Trikont Verlag was founded in 1967, and would become a key publishing house of the Student Movement and the autonomist/Sponti movement that emerged from it; in France, the publisher Maspero launched a French version of OSPAAAL's *Tricontinental* journal, only to see it banned by the state. Being censored did not necessarily endear Maspero to the Situationists, who attacked him for "masperizing" their writings, and who – never to be out-radicalized – rejected the Tricontinental as a proxy for state socialism and assorted variations of Leninism.[62] Indeed, with its roots in the NAM, the Tricontinental movement needs to be assessed critically as part of an overall constellation – a constellation of divergent and reconvergent lines of non-alignment. The Situationist International itself can be regarded as yet another postwar "non-aligned" international, pursuing its own form of Tricontinentalism separate from the Havana movement.

Recently, this long-neglected dimension of the SI has been reexamined by contemporary artists such as Samson Kambalu, who has engaged in a critical dialogue with the Situationist Gianfranco Sanguinetti from a perspective informed by Malawian Nyau culture as a gift economy, and Vincent Meessen. In films, installations and publications, Meessen has looked into contributions by Congolese SI members or associates such Diangani Lungela and Joseph Mbelolo ya Mpiku.[63] The former coauthored a tract on Congo with Debord, placing the putative Congolese revolution under the aegis of "Lumumba and Liebknecht, Babeuf and Durutti" – and, of course, called for self-management through councils – while the latter wrote a May '68 protest song that Meessen dug up from the archives of Situationist Raoul Vaneigem, and turned into the basis of his video installation *One.Two.Three* (2015).[64] More of an autonomous satellite of the SI was the Jamaican George Myers,

a.k.a. Joseph Edwards, a.k.a. Fundi, the Caribbean Situationist, who produced a map charting a history-from-below of uprisings across the Caribbean (a map that Meessen has also incorporated in some of his works).

The most prominent voice from within the decolonizing Third World within the SI was the Algerian Mustapha Khayati – author of *Class Struggles in Algeria,* and of the tract "Setting Straight Some Popular Misconceptions About Revolutions in Underdeveloped Countries," which was reprinted by the Caribbean Situationist.[65] Khayati argues that the seeming triumphs of various anticolonial/national liberation movements have usually resulted in a rule of bureaucracies claiming to be communist: "the oppressive regimes that have installed themselves wherever national liberation revolutions believed themselves victorious are only one of the guises by which the *return of the repressed* takes place."[66] Seeing nothing but a dismal version of Bolshevism, "Ben-Bellaism, Nasserism, Titoism and Maoism," or indeed "Fanonism and Castro-Guevaraism," Khayati puts a spin on the underdevelopment trope by claiming that "THE ONLY PEOPLE who are really underdeveloped are those who see a positive value in the power of their masters" and that "The rush to catch up with capitalist reification remains the best road to reinforced underdevelopment, before intoning that "SO FAR THE REVOLUTIONS in the underdeveloped countries have only tried to imitate Bolshevism in various ways. From now on the point is to go beyond it through the *power of the soviets.*"[67]

A crucial link between the Situationists and the council communist tradition had been the group Socialisme ou Barbarie, with which Guy Debord had been affiliated around 1960. For part of the 1950s, the group's leading light, Cornelius Castoriadis, had been close to the Johnson-Forest Tendency – the offshoot of Trotsky's Fourth International established by C.L.R. James, Grace Lee Boggs, and Raya Dunayevskaya. In 1958 James, Boggs, and Castoriadis coauthored the pamphlet *Facing Reality,* which argued that the Hungarian uprising was a councilist revolution showing that the

working class had no need for "proletarian Jesuits," i.e., a professional revolutionary vanguard.[68] "In these unprecedented examples of leadership the Workers Councils put an end to the foolish dreams, disasters, and despair which have attended all those who, since 1923, have placed the hope for socialism in the elite party, whether Communist or social democrat."[69] The tract would echo through the 1960s and 1970s – for instance in a 1975 article by then-autonomist and later right-wing hack Thomas Schmid, who analysed the situation of the post-68 movement under the marvelous *Denglish* title "Facing Reality: Organisation Kaputt."[70]

If non-alignment is a crucial feature of modern counter-globalization projects, or antisystemic worldmaking efforts, keeping in view its contradictions and limitations is essential in light of the current need for *coming together differentially* under conditions that both necessitate and frustrate such a project.[71] There are moments when the stars do appear to (non-)align, even in the compromised context of contemporary art. Certain exhibitions do indeed form constellations of images and practitioners that present an alternative imaginary, other imaginings of who-we-are as humans, amounting to a project-based transnational of potentiality – a transnational whose potential manifests itself through partial actualizations with varying degrees of fictitiousness. Particularly successful in this regard were projects by curator Vivian Ziherl such as *Bell Invites* (2016) and *Frontier Imaginaries* (2016-18), with *Bell Invites* bringing together Australian Aboriginal artist Richard Bell and veteran Black Panther artist Emory Douglas with younger (Dutch) Black artists and activists. Here, something lights up: a decolonial alignment as a potential Inter- or Transnational.

Decolonizing the International

Moscow used the Comintern to support communist movements elsewhere as much as possible, through Moscow-controlled political parties and various front organizations, including many cultural ones. Anticolonial and Black liberation struggles were likewise turned into branches of this political trust. In this respect, a crucial organization in the Comintern organigram was

the ITUCNW (International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers), led by George Padmore and later by Otto Huiswoud. It has been argued that such (mostly Caribbean and American) Black activists sought to create a "Black International" within, or in conjunction with, the Comintern – complemented by a de facto "Black Women's International" that emerged from the transcontinental activities of Hermina Huiswoud, Maude White, Williana Burroughs and others.[72]

For some time, the Comintern seemed to be amenable to the agenda pursued by the likes of Padmore, Claude McKay and Otto Huiswoud. Alongside Sen Katayama, the Surinamese Huiswoud had been one of the earliest members of the American Communist Party, but he found it difficult to put what was known as "the Negro question" on the agenda, or at least to politicize it properly in the face of indifference and racism within the ranks. The US party tried to prevent McKay from attending the 1924 Comintern conference in Moscow, although he ended up going, as did Huiswoud. While more of a Party loyalist than McKay, Huiswoud nonetheless pleaded with the Comintern to recognize the revolutionary nature of non-Communist, "purely Negro" organizations that were "influencing the minds of the Negroes against imperialism."[73] Influenced by the Black Internationalism of such organizations, "the Negro population would have some sort of reaction against the oppression and suppression to which they were subjected throughout the world."[74] Rather than dogmatically reject such Black organizations, the Comintern should liaise with them (and, possibly, instrumentalize them). Katayama later argued that "if the US party had listened to the Comintern" around this time, "instead of putting up every obstruction on the work of the Comintern on the Negro problems, there might have been a strong Negro revolutionary movement in America today!"[75]

The historian Minkah Makalani notes that "Huiswoud and McKay drew on earlier arguments from Asian radicals to stress the international dimensions of race, reframing the Negro problem as a global problem requiring international organization.

They joined Roy, Katayama, and others in articulating an inter-colonial internationalism through Comintern policy debates."[76] However, the tendency to reduce racism to an epiphenomenon of class conflict was never fully defeated, nor was the tendency to view the "Negro question" as an American problem, thus undermining any more ambitious transatlantic project. In the context of the anti-fascist Popular Front, which necessitated alliances with "moderates," the Comintern wavered in its support of anticolonial and anti-racist struggle. In 1933 – preceding the official adoption of the Popular Front strategy – Padmore stepped down as *Negro Worker* editor, and by 1934 relations with the Bolsheviks were damaged beyond repair, as he concluded "international Negro work is being sacrificed [by the Comintern] at a time when we cannot afford to weaken the Negro liberation struggles."[77] (The Huiswouds would remain loyal to Moscow much longer.)

In the context of the Comintern and the affiliated "Black International" of the 1920s and 1930s, the avant-gardes intermingled and frequently all but fused. Anton de Kom's anticolonial tract *Wij slaven van Suriname* (We Slaves of Suriname, 1934) is written in a crisp and clipped prose that anchors it in the *nieuwe zakelijkheid* of the era, and it came with a modernist cover featuring a photo by the designer Piet Zwart – though Zwart's far more ambitious photomontage of De Kom's head emerging from a multitude of Surinamese people, like a potential counter-Leviathan, was unfortunately not used.[78] The art historian Christian Kravagna has called for a "postcolonial art history of contact" that traces people's movements across networks and their contacts across a world marked by globalization-through-colonization.[79] I would add – though this is implicit in Kravagna's account – that this needs to be an *expanded* art history of contact that does not limit itself to a narrow canon of "autonomous" institutional practices. Examples would include the Comintern-backed 1931 *La Vérité sur les colonies* exhibition, for which the surrealists devised some anti-colonial displays, or the activities of Aimé Césaire from Paris in the 1930s to Martinique in the 1940s and beyond. Of course,

such a history is not limited to the Black Atlantic but includes, for instance, India and Japan and *its* colonies.

In recent years, some artistic and curatorial projects have made some of the links and nodes of this networks of contacts sensate. It is one thing to see a diagram of Huiswoud's mid-1930s transatlantic network in a scholarly study, and another to see documents that are the physical traces of his network in conjunction with works by contemporary artists at The Black Archives in Amsterdam, or at The Black Archives' installation at documenta fifeen, or to hear the artist Patricia Kaersenhout read a Langston Hughes poem from a volume dedicated by the poet to Hermina Huiswoud in Wendelien van Oldenborgh's film *Cinema Olanda* (2017).[80] Beyond the Comintern context, one can also think of Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa's archival exhibition on Amy Ashwood Garvey, or Filipa Cesar's written and filmic work on Amilcar Cabral. Such names represent the rise of Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism in the wake of the Comintern's shift to an anti-fascist Popular Front with bourgeois parties, with its decreasing emphasis on anticapitalism and anticolonialism.

If the Black Marxist internationalists can inspire veneration and nostalgia, their original project has also been presented as a mere stepping-stone. For all its scholarly richness and critical incisiveness, Cedric J. Robinson's classic study *Black Marxism* is markedly teleological: Positing a fundamental incongruence between Marxism and Black radical thought and practice, Robinson discusses the failings of the Comintern to set the stage for the seemingly foreordained triumph of Black nationalism.[81] In the present day, Achille Mbembe identifies communism with attempts to impose the classless society by fiat, through the fabled dictatorship of the proletariat – and in this endeavor, Mmembe argues, human plurality comes to be seen as an obstacle to be extirpated.[82] This, however, essentially means handing over the *Definitionsmacht* (definatory power) to the Kremlin of the 1920s and 1930s. Undialectical forms of classism that would amount to a denial of "caste" issues are as problematical as the ontological essentialization of Blackness in Afropessimism.[83]

Clearly, the Comintern's anticolonialism of the 1920s and 1930s was often as rhetorical and questionable as the Soviet Union's support of newly decolonized Third World nations in

the postwar era, when, in Adom Getachew's assessment, the project of leaders like Nkrumah was "increasingly tethered to the territorial form of the nation-state."[84] The term decolonization has a curious habit of oscillating between mundane reality and exciting buzzword. Decolonization after the war was such a mundane and compromised reality, as Western powers funneled the process into a neocolonial framework. Frantz Fanon characterized the process acerbically:

> a veritable panic takes hold of the colonialist governments in turn. Their purpose is to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation toward the right and to disarm the people: quick, quick, let's decolonize. Decolonize the Congo before it turns into another Algeria. Vote the constitutional framework for all Africa, create the French Communauté, renovate that same Communauté, but for God's sake let's decolonize quick...."[85]

Fanon opposed "hasty," Western-directed decolonization with an account of "proper" decolonization as a "program of complete disorder" engaged with "the veritable creation of new men."[86] His tabula rasa rhetoric may be problematical, but what is key is that he conceives of decolonization neither in primarily epistemological nor in narrowly statist or economistic terms. Rather, his focus is on *practice,* and on territorial liberation from military and financial colonial structures, an overhaul of ideological and cultural values, and fundamental changes in lived relations. Such a criticque of "actually existing decolonization" also implies a critique of the NAM, and is closer to OSPAAAL's tricontinentalism. In their 1969 "Third Cinema" manifesto, originally published in the *Tricontinental* bulletin, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino took cues from Fanon. Defining Third Cinema as "the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point - in a word, the decolonisation of culture," they argue that the filmmaker

needs to place their art "first at the service of life itself, ahead of art; dissolve aesthetics in the life of society: only in this way, as Fanon said, can decolonisation become possible and culture, cinema, and beauty – at least, what is of greatest importance to us – become our culture, our films, and our sense of beauty."[87]

Solanas and Getino remain within a horizon of "national liberation" that can be questioned, yet their sense of decolonization as an embedded praxis is refreshing at a moment when the work of various twentieth-century Caribbean and Latin American thinkers and artists is all too often reduced to a refrain about "modernity/coloniality/decoloniality" and a focus on "decolonizing knowledge." Walter Mignolo's pronouncements on the need to "delink from the colonial matrix of power" are catnip for contemporary European academics precisely because Mignolo's version of *decolonial praxis* always ends up revolving around grandiose and verbose epistemological claims.[88] Obviously any crude economism must be avoided – but the same goes for an ultimately equally reductive "epistemologism." Mignolo's readings of authors such as Fanon or Wynter are highly selective, and readings of Mignolo introduce yet more reductions. When Mignolo engages with Sylvia Wynter's nuanced and in-depth reading of C.L.R. James, the result is a denial of James's Marxism. It is not so much that Wynter "removes James from Marxists' co-optation," as Mignolo avers; rather, she unpacks James's political and literary writing to arrive at an exposé of what she terms James's counterdoctrine, and this she sees not as a negation, but rather as an enlargement of James's explicitly Marxist frame of reference.[89]

In an appropriation of Baudrillard's semiotic critique of Marxist productivism, Wynter argues that in James's account, "The system of capital accumulation is not only carried out through labor activity, but through the life activities of the popular groups as workers, as consumers, or merely as signifiers of non-value, that is, those like [James's character of] Matthew Bondsman who serve as the 'refuse' of the system, as the symbolic inversion of norm value, the liminal category that defines

the norm from which social value is reckoned and the mode of measurement of the consumption ratio legitimated."[90] Wynter's account is a complexification, not a reduction: "The aesthetic is not less 'material' than the 'economic.' The expropriation of the means of aesthetic perception, of the mechanics of critical judgment are no less and perhaps far more terrible with respect to its consequences than the expropriation of the means of production."[91] In developing what she calls a "pieza conceptual frame" on the basis of James's work (the pieza being the Portuguese term for the African slave who serves as the "standard measure"), Wynter develops a materialist epistemology far more incisive than any drone about "coloniality."[92]

In today's artistic and para-academic milieus, the epistemological-cosmological turn all too often moves in circles. Recently, the HKW in Berlin organized an exhibition on the basis of Wynter's essay "The Ceremony Found" (2015), in which she sets out to develop a "counter-cosmogony" beyond and against the modern Western framework. Among her key references was the French anthropologist Maurice Godelier, who studied the way in which the Baruya people of Papua New Guinea ground their social order in foundational myths or cosmogonies. With Papuans once again providing twentieth-century theorists with crucial insight, Wynter argues that Godelier's research shows "that the Baruya's existential imperative of making their empirical agency opaque to themselves also functions as an imperative universally applicable to all modes or *genres* of being hybridly human."[93] She insists that the present "economic and social order" is likewise instituted through "secular" founding myths; "this mode provisions them/us as ethno-class *homo oeconomicus* men and women of their/our fictive nation state mode of Western and Westernized bourgeois kind."[94]

The HKW curators rightly identified Wynter's essay as a key text, and the resulting show, *Ceremony: Burial for an Undead World*, had strong moments, yet the curators' "cosmogonic" investment in Wynter, Aby Warburg or Ernesto de Martino resulted in a rather excessive sprawl of iconography accompanied by a

mystificatory myth-ritualism.[95] Wynterian prose can make some uncomfortable, and others all too comfortable. I would stress that her insistence on the need for a meta-perspective to arrive at a counter-cosmogony is a proposition – necessarily sketchy in parts – for forms of praxis.[96] In a dialogue with one of my own texts, Wynter rightly comments that any "'radical changing of the economic and social order' necessarily entails, I propose, the overturning of the now globally hegemonic, *biologically absolute* answer that *We*-the-West at present give to the question of who we-are-are as humans."[97] For "entails," many contemporary academics quietly substitute "presupposes" and spend their careers arguing the finer details of those presuppositions, thus drastically reducing what Wynter conceived of as practice. Referencing Césaire and Fanon, among others, she develops a materialist epistemology far removed from today's superstructural epistemologism. At one point, she glosses "our collective *turn* towards what I shall define as our *Second Emergence"* as "now fully conscious agents in the autopoetic institution of a *new* kind of planetarity" in terms explicitly derived from Huey Newton: those of an "'intercommunal' community."[98]

In the accompanying catalogue and in a three-day side program titled *Where Is the Planetary?,* the organizers did emphasize that Wynter's "overturning" must entail practices of becoming human and becoming planetary otherwise. Nonetheless, all this remained fairly abstract and was somewhat buried in a profusion of components; another side program was named Cosmic *Awakening.* On the basis of Wynter's essay, one could also envisage a project that – in taking the exhibition spaces and auditorium of the HKW as spaces of assembly for people, objects and images – tries to develop and concretize her comments on the institution of a new kind of planetarity, and of intercommunalism, by foregrounding issues of transnational organization. This potential project haunted the actual exhibition and its publication.

You and Which International? The International and Which You?

Exhibition projects such as *Bell Invites, Frontier Imaginaries* or *Ceremony* take place within the project-based economy of the contemporary artworld, enabled by precarious public funding and budget airlines, questions of organizational form return as soon the building of a sustainable force for structural social change is at stake. At the end of the 1970s, drawing on her experiences in both socialist and feminist British organizations in the collective tract *Beyond the Fragments,* Sheila Rowbotham quoted from *Facing Reality* to the effect that "the vanguard organisation substituted political theory and an internal political life for the human response and sensitivities of its members to ordinary people."[99] Rowbotham posits "the growth of new forms of organizing within the feminist movement" as "part of such a larger recovery of a libertarian socialist tradition."[100] The impact of feminism on the reckoning with the Leninist organizational model, and on "autonomous turn" of the left since the 1970s, can hardly be overstated.

For the longest time, "professional revolutionary" was a male profession. The First International's full name, International Workingmen's Association, reflects the gendered nature of labor in industrial capitalism. Consequently, the activists and theorists who put unwaged domestic or reproductive labor on the agenda in the 1970s – Selma James, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici – created a transnational movement that has been called "the embryo of a Women's Internationale":

> When it is a question of "network," it is about the "organizational network" that exists from one country to another, or, if you prefer, the embryo of a Women's Internationale for wages for housework. In fact, it involves mainly Italian, English, American, and Canadian women. Further, there are "wage groups" that expressly refuse to be part of this network.[101]

Once again, then, the International is a fragment, project, and projection, part of a larger constellation that refuses to become a whole. If some expressly refuse to be part of the network, others are connected to the organized network behind Wages for Housework – the International Feminist Collective and its local groups – through a variety of strong and structural, attenuated or incidental links. Often in the context of or, in relation to, autonomist self-organization, 1970s and 1980s feminist practice fostered a kind of internationalism that has its roots in anarchism rather than Marxism. The feminist international was a decentralized or even distributed network of networks.[102]

This informal, confederated feminist international included many artist and media groups, ranging from Women Artists in Revolution to the London Women's Film Group or *L'Insoumuse* in Paris.[103] The real ideological turn in relation to media and technology, however, took place in the 1990s, with (the reception of) Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," the Australian collective VNS Matrix's *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century*, and Sadie Plant's writings. These sources were synthesized by the Old Boys Network, an alliance that organized the First Cyberfeminist International at Documenta X's Hybrid Workspace in 1997. At that gathering (which was followed in subsequent years by two more of such summit meetings in Rotterdam and Hamburg), VNS Matrix member Julianne Pierce noted that their early celebration of the cyberfeminist utopia of the net rang somewhat hollow as the distributed network of the World Wide Web had given rise to powerful nodes and monopolies: "while we confront our subjectivities, Bill Gates is making $500 a second. Big Daddy is flourishing and the suits control the data stream."[104] While using somewhat disturbing metaphors – "online frontier woman," "colonising the amorphous world of cyberspace" – Pierce rightly observed that VNS Matrix had helped create "a viral meme infecting theory, art and the academy," which did effectively challenge the male-codedness of computing.

If 1990s cyberfeminism was self-consciously self-publicizing, this part of its legacy lives on in hype-oriented exhibitions,

anthologies full of faux-radical dross and ever more memefied neo-retro manifestos. As limited as some of these projects are, feminist "memification," they can also be regarded as an attempt to reappropriate control over the image of the international. Historically, the international was a myth or a conspiracy theory before it took on a degree of reality. Often becoming a Rorschach test for fascist fears and fantasies, internationals can try to exploit and operationalize this image. After May '68, the Situationist International found itself turned into "a *collective star*" by media and hangers-on with a tendency to regard the upheavals as the result of a "worldwide plot by a handful of individuals"; even as the SI as an organization was struggling to continue meaningful work. Always having opted for an exclusive, reductive membership so as to not become a hierarchical mass organization (even though some might argue that on its micro scale it still managed to be plenty hierarchical), the remaining Situationists (essentially Debord and Sanguinetti) decided to let the myth do the work. *The Real Split in the International* boasts that "from now on, situationists are everywhere," and "the more famous our theses become, the more shadowy our own presence will be." [105] While the SI had clung on to a centralized organizational model for much of its existence – Marx with more than a hint of Babeuf and Bakunin – this statement marks its autonomist sublation.

In her 1979 reckoning, Rowbotham questioned the relationship between socialist parties and "autonomous movements of self-definition" (Black, feminist, gay), and advocated a dispersion and transformation of leadership. The aim was to go "beyond the fragments," but more in the manner of a montage than in the form of a supposedly seamless whole. "How can we struggle for prefigurative changes through an organization which reproduces the relationships of power dominant in capitalism?"[106] The answer could only take the form of decentralized networks, or networks of networks; an archipelagic assemblage. In recent times, such networked autonomist activism has thrived. Some embrace mythmaking; even while the Invisible Committee is part of an

ecosystem of groupuscules and movements, it caters to conspiracist fantasies about a hidden directorate. There is a risk in hewing all too closely to the right's playbook, being content to be cast as the perfect enemy.[107] How to shape alternate imaginaries?

On the autonomist-feminist front, former Colectivo Situaciones member Verónica Gago builds on the International Women's Strike – originally, a Latin American network that has been organizing on International Women's Day since 2017 – to posit a Feminist International.[108] Gago theorizes assemblies and strikes with reference to Rosa Luxemburg and the October Revolution, as well as Selma James and the Combahee River Collective's pioneering of a socialist identity politics. Although the book explores the notion of the Feminist International rather less than that of the assembly or the strike, it is titled *Feminist International.* Memefied theory for the attention theory, then? Putting a positive spin on things, we could regard her book as propositional; in Erin Manning's Whitehead-inspired words, propositions "oscillate between potential and actualization" and can act as "a lure for concept formation."[109] Clearly, Gago is not so much concerned with launching an actual organization as with providing a unifying concept for networked activism. Theorizing feminist *potencia* as a "desiring capacity" that "drives what is perceived as possible, collectively and in each body," Gago appears to be floating the Feminist International precisely in order to change what is perceived as possible.[110]

Anticapitalist divergence must be antipatriarchal deviance. While authors are digging in the history of gender inequality to see "how we got stuck" with patriarchy, strong feminist and queer movements are prefiguring and – to a point – enacting postpatriarchy in the present.[111] In some of her works, artist Dora García presents the feminist movement in Latin America in rhythmic time-images. In her film *If I Could Wish for Something* (2021), documentary footage of demonstrations is combined with scenes in which the trans musician La Bruja de Texcoco writes and performs a song loosely based on "Wenn ich mir was wünschen dürfte." This

montage of temporalities and forms of affect, of collective action and (trans)individual longing, becomes part of new assemblages when the film is shown and discussed. To be sure, none of this amounts to a set of blueprints for an International, feminist or otherwise – thankfully. What García and her collaborators practice is a work of assemblage. They assemble the fragments in a constellation that does not negate them *qua* fragments, but enables new relations. Some such relations may solidify into organizational form.

Toward a Terrestrial

In line with cyberfeminism, some feminist curators, authors and artists attempt to detourn blockchain technology for creating alternative kinds of Distributes Autonomous Organizations (DAOs), or perhaps Distributed Cooperative Organiztions (DisCos). If existing blockchain-based models such as the Distributed Autonomous Organization are essentially based on property and contracts, amounting to a "reinvention of the company form" in a Peter Thiel-scented ether of libertarianism, the question still remains if anti-state technolibertarianism can provide some means for creating "a networked, self-sustaining framework for the development of consensus" whose distributed infrastructure offers

some much-needed opacity for the preparation of public interventions?[112] Can the machinery of networked surveillance capitalism be used to foster forms of decision making that would actually enable a "Left Air Brigade," as well as a myriad of less spectacular activities? What would the contemporary distributed version of Lenin's crypto-corporate Comintern be?

The answer to that question is perhaps Progressive International. Working with Jonas Staal, PI collaborated with unions on organizing impressive campaigns such as Make Amazon Pay, yet is also beholden to the sclerotic Cuban regime and other states that it sees as having the potential to "renew the project of non-alignment, grounded in the principles of sovereignty, peace, and cooperation."[113] When PI participated in a conference in Havana to renew the Tricontinental's 1966 Havana Declaration, the echo of this grand affair remained limited to media accounts and websites operated by Progressive International, or by Yannis Varoufakis's DIEM25. For all its retro-Leninist traits, PI is hyper-contemporary in that it is by and large a propositional fiction, comparable to the Feminist International or the Invisible Committee. With all its pros and cons, it is one shard making up the overall constellation fragments of various pasts that may still hold potential – if used critically, that is to say: if seen as part of the constellation and placed in relation.

Various Black/Caribbean and feminist internationals can serve as safeguards against one-sided and reductive readings and appropriations of the project of internationalism, or transnationalism. In an age when accelerationism – that geriatric disease of the European art-affiliated intelligentsia – hawks its retro-futurist fantasies, the Transnational must not be another manifestation of accelerationist longing for the jetpacks of yesteryear. *Tomorrowland ist abgebrannt.* The accelerationist future is already here: the unfolding future of surveillance capitalism, of machine learning and predictive analytics, of relentless value extraction from the fabric of human (inter)actions. There is no earthly reason to believe that an acceleration and intensification of this history would result in an Engels-style leap from quantity to quality, would result in a dialectical self-overcoming of capitalism, before the planet has become uninhabitable for those who self-identify as *some kind of human.* If capitalist modernity as a world-building project was violently extractivist and Earth-destroying, then the coming transnational as a divergent form of worldmaking must effect a different relation between world and Earth.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels asserted their internationalism by stating that

> the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man).[114]

The slippage from "whole world" to "whole earth" is suggestive. As Jean-Luc Nancy, who quotes this passage, has noted, capitalist "globalization" has "[circumscribed] the earth more and more in a horizon without opening or exit," resulting in "a

world where we only find a globe," or "an earth without sky."[115] If the Earth is (or was) the given, Earth is the aboriginal ground that enables the world-historical process, and is transformed and wrecked by its dialectical violence. This is precisely why people find it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism: The end of capitalism *is* the end of the world, the world of Wynter's *homo oeconomicus*.

In spite of his remarks on soil depletion and colonial primitive accumulation, Marx did not develop a systematic account of the dialectic of Earth and world. The capitalocene forces us to reconsider the question, and to abandon notions of Mankind that are the Western sovereign in fairly transparent disguise. Bruno Latour and and Déborah Danowski/Eduardo Viveiros de Castro differentiate between humans (the false universalism of Western "Humankind") and what they call Terrans or "the Earthbound" (…).[116] This is a twenty-first century version of history as race war or class warfare. However, Latour's insistence on the need of *aterrir*, of "landing" on Earth, is not uncontested. In his *Écologie décoloniale*, Malcolm Ferdinand critiques the imaginary of a return to Earth through a reading of the trope of Noah's Ark, the slave ship, and the spaceship. Who is it that "returns to Earth"? Is any return to Earth not predicated on a fundamental *refus du monde*, a modern exodus from a shared world?[117] This critique needs to be taken on board. Any project of *aterrissement* must be dialectical in a way that would be anathema to Latour: becoming-terrestrial must be seen precisely as an integral part of antisystemic worldmaking.[118]

In *Down to Earth*, Latour introduces an "attractor" called the Terrestrial – in contradistinction to three other such attractors: the Local, the Global, and the Out-of-this-World.[119] By and large, his proposition remains within the horizon of Sciences Po theory radicalism. If the Terrestrial is to be a political actor, which is what Latour argues, then it needs to be understood precisely as the new International – as something to be built, as artefact. Marx famously noted that what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is that the architect makes a conscious

design, whereas the bee follows its instinct.[120] In the age of swarm intelligence and hive minds, we are less certain about this distinction; less certain about not being bees. No doubt the terrestrial in some way also imposes itself on the humans that build it, and no doubt issues of nonhuman representation, of including "nonhuman comrades," are pressing.[121] Yet it is clear that in a constellation that includes other technological and environmental actors, humans have a particular capacity – or a need – to translate what may be conflicting imperatives into design, and to ask: I, the Terrestrial must be built – how to go about this project?

The Terrestrial can have presence as a specter, as branding without much in the way of organizational or institutional infrastructure to back it up. The Invisible Committee has long embraced mythmaking, leading to excited Fox News hosts waving *The Coming Insurrection* in front of the camera; at the same time, even while catering to conspiracist fantasies, the Invisible Committee is of course part of an ecosystem or network of groupuscules and movements. One way to think about the coming Terrestrial is in terms of a coalition of survivances, of *zones à défendre* in the Global South, the Former West and elsewhere; a loose coalition from which more public manifestations can emerge. A next step would be looking into networked forms for transnational organization, decision making and funding. As with previous internationals, the coming Terrestrial can only be an intervention in and modulation of existing (capitalist) infrastructures – not the networks of steam travel and trusts, but of cheap flights and cloud computing, with their destructive ecological consequences.

Crowdfunding the transnational may not be the biggest challenge. What would the mechanisms of decision-making be like? How much organizational centralization is needed on top of a decentralized technological infrastructure? How to go beyond Marx-vs-Bakunin reenactments? How to marshal the intelligence of the hive mind and of volatile combinations of distinct individuals? Are there actually existing institutions and organizational structures that can be incubators of the Terrestrial – including in

the art world, that playground of global finance capital? If, in Peter Osborne's words, the contemporary condition is a "disjunctive unity of present times," of different presents, then it comes as no surprise that deepening and widening rifts traverse the field (or fields?) of art.[122] The Transnational or Terrestrial needs a notion and practice of futurity that is multiple and open to contradictions between different versions of the present – contemporaneity as an anachronistic montage. This process involves the severing of old alliances and the building of new ones: becoming *Zeitgenossen* – comrades of time – with unexpected people and peoples.[123]

In the process, autonomists find themselves studying Marshall Ganz out of dissatisfaction with spontaneism and horizontalism, and the French movement of Les Soulèvements de la terre – founded in the ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, which insists on the need to combine autonomous infrastructures with putting pressure on the state – critiques part of the autonomous left for refusing to go beyond individual desertions and immediate elective affinities.[124] Meanwhile, the fascist transnational again paints the specter of race war. When white supremacist organizers such as Tommy Robinson unleashed hordes of rioters on British cities (and especially on asylum seekers and Muslims) in the summer of 2024, Elon Musk commented on a video originally posted by Robinson with the words "civil war is inevitable."[125] In the far-right imaginary, such civil war *is* a race war – a war against immigrant invaders and their woke enablers. The only logical and successful conclusion to such a war would be genocide. It is against neoliberal biopolitics morphing into neofascist necropolitics that emancipatory and abolitionist forms of life must organize – in concatenations that actualize the specter of the Terrestrial to the point where its potential comes into view.

Endnotes

1 Jonas Staal, "Transunions," https://biennalewarszawa.pl/en/biennale-warszawa-2019/trans-unie-transunions/

2 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007; Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchist and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London/New York: Verso, 2005), p. 54

3 Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London/New York: Verso, 2015), p. 93.

4 Elisée Reclus, "Evolution, Revolution, and the Anarchist Ideal" (1898), in *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: Selected Writings of Elisée Reclus*, eds. and trans. John Clark and Camille Martin (Oakland: PM Press, 2013), p. 150.

5 The International Workingmen's Association [Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels], *Fictitious Splits in the International* (1872), online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/03/fictitious-splits.htm; quoted in Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution. Vol. 4: Critique of Other Socialisms* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), p. 150.

6 International Workingmen's Association, *Fictitious Splits in the International.*

7 Mikhail Bakunin, "Open letter to the Bologna section of the International," 1871, collection IISH, Michail Aleksandrovič Bakunin Papers, no. 50, *https://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH00018/ArchiveContentList*; quoted in Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution. Vol. 4,* p. 299.

8 "Circular to all the Federations of the International Association of Workers, or The Sonvilier Circular," November 12, 1871, https://www.panarchy.org/jura/sonvilier.eng.html

9 Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution. Vol. 4,* p. 144.

10 Joan Ungersma Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 267–95. If Ungersma Halperin makes a fairly convincing case for Fénéon's "authorship" on the basis of circumstantial evidence and, at times, of hearsay, a recent Parisian exhibition and catalogue – *Félix Fénéon: Anarchiste, critique d'art, éditeur, collectionneur* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay et de l'orangerie/ Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, 2019) – sidestepped the question by focussing on Fénéon's virtuoso performance in court and subsequent acquittal.

11 Anderson, *Under Three Flags*, p. 2.

12 The core of *Wir fahren für Bakunin* is a series of drawings, whose exhibition became a vehicle for the proposed tour through the various city, which each stop occasioning specific encounters and collaboration – and a search for Bakunin lookalikes, who were photographed and invited for a

collective dinner. In actuality Frankfurt, Hamburg and Vienna were to be the only ports of call.

13 Ross, *Communal Luxury,* pp. 11–12.

14 Léopold Lambert, "The Paris Commune and the World: Introduction," in *The Funambulist* no. 34 (March/April 2021), p. 13

15 Ross, *Communal Luxury,* pp. 104–142.

16 See Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019); Getachew characterizes the International Workingmen's Association as having constituted the first such project (p. 3).

17 "Plechanow und Sen Katayama erheben sich und reichen sich am Bureau die Hände. Der Kongreß bricht in minutenlangen brausenden Beifall aus." Brochure *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongreß zu Amsterdam, 14. bis 20. August 1904* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1904), p. 8, online at https://archive.org/details/internationaler00inte.

18 StadsarchiefAmsterdamArchiefvandePolitie:fotos,HDAB00001000016_001; https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/d4322333-b35f-997e-1ca3-02543e9223b2/media/db7ffa0f-f7af-97cd-024a-2f82641d630f?mode=-detail&view=horizontal&q=Internationaal%20Socialistisch%20Congres&rows=1&page=7

19 See *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongreß zu Amsterdam* for the Dutch resolution on the general strike and the report by committee member Henriette Roland Holst (pp. 24-26), as well as the ensuing debate (pp. 26–30), including an interjection by a certain "Pfannkuch," who must surely be Anton Pannekoek. See also Henriette Roland Holst's retrospective account in *Kapitaal en arbeid in Nederland*, deel 2 (1932; Nijmegen: Sun, 1973), pp. 82–83, which glosses over the fundamental antinomies that beset the debate at the time.

20 Invoking "Kronstadt" – Trotsky's crushing of the Kronstadt soldiers' council – is a cherished ritual in anarchist and councilist circles.

21 See J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (1972; London: Watkins, 2008), pp. 160–223.

22 This generates fact–checking pieces with mind-boggling titles such as "No, George Soros is not a Nazi who funds Antifa," see https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/aug/06/viral-image/no-george-soros-not-nazi-who-funds-antifa/.

23 In John Buchan's 1915 novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (which was effectively the first spy novel, and became one of Hitchcock's most successful English films), the protagonist is informed that "capital has neither conscience nor a fatherland," and that the Jews are behind it all. Though this rant about Jewish anarchists is later revealed to be a symptom of the

informant's biases, this does not destroy the latter's overall credibility. See Luc Boltanski, *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge/Malden MA: Polity, 2014), p. 129.

24 Winston Churchill, "Zionism versus Bolshevism" (1920), quoted in Ellen Engelstad and Mímir Kristjánsson "The Return of 'Judeo-Bolshevism'," in Jacobin, 16 February 2019, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/02/antisemitism-judaism-bolsheviks-socialists-conspiracy-theories. The full text of Churchill's article can be found on any number of Neofascist websites.

25 Churchill, "Zionism versus Bolshevism." Churchil contrasts "useful" and patriotic "National Jews" with the scheming and rootless "International Jews." It is the latter who are behind Bolshevism and who need to be combatted (especially by the National Jews). Churchill embraced Zionism and presents the creation of "a Jewish State under the protection of the British Crown" as a strategy to thwart communism's plans of world domination.

26 See for instance these two posters in museum collections: *Das jüdische Komplott* (1941), https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/29114, and *Wer ist am Kriege schuld?* (1941-45), https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1092690

27 Daniel Damler, *Konzern und Moderne. Die verbundene juristische Person in der visuellen Kultur, 1880-1980* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2016), pp. 22–32, 73–81.

28 Damler, *Konzern und Moderne*, pp. 179–181, 193–209.

29 Damler, *Konzern und Moderne,* p. 181.

30 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), chapter IV, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch04.htm

31 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), chapter III, online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch03.htm

32 C. L. R. James ("Johnson"), et al., "Preface (From Second Edition)" (1956), in *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Detroit: Facing Reality Publishing Committee, 1969), p. 10. Cosigned by "Chaulieu" (Castoridis), this 1956 preface to *State Capitalism and World Revolution* can be seen as announcing *Facing Reality.*

33 On the development of the Popular Front strategy, see Jonathan Haslam, "The Comintern and the Origins of the Popular Front 1934-1935," in *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979), no. 3, pp. 673–691.

34 See Jason Earle, "Les deux cent familles: A Conspiracy Theory of the Avant-Garde," in *Romanic Review* 104 (2013), no. 3–4, pp. 333–352, https://read.dukeupress.edu/romanic-review/article-abstract/104/3-4/333/165808/Les-Deux-Cents-Familles-A-Conspiracy-Theory-of-the?redirectedFrom=fulltext

35 Moishe Postone's claims that antisemitism revolves around an identification of Jews with finance, and therefore abstraction, have provided the intellectual foundation for a kind of "anti-antisemitism" that involves chiding leftist critiques of financial capitalism for using antisemitic tropes. For a critique, see Michael Sommer, *Anti-Postone*, trans. Maciej Zurowski (n.p.: Cosmonaut Press, 2021). I will return to this issue in the second volume of *Forms of Abstraction.*

36 For the BNF copy of the poster, see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9017914w?rk=21459;2

37 Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 68–69.

38 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* pp. 141–165.

39 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* p. 165.

40 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* p. 75–76.

41 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* p. 98.

42 See chapters 17 – 19 of Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651); Foucault, pp. 89–99.

43 For Hobbes's account of representation, see chapter 16 of *Leviathan.*

44 For the (partial) English translation of Raymond Queneau's 1947 edition of Kojève's 1930s lectures on Hegel, see Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1980); see also Sven Lütticken, "Posthuman Prehistory," in *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice After Autonomy* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), pp. 115–142.

45 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* p. 58. As David Macey notes, during Foucault's formative years at the École Nationale Supérieure, a certain French version of Hegel was dominant there, resulting in a spate of Hegelian theses (including Foucault's own). Kojève, whose lectures were published by Raymond Queneau in 1947, with their well-known spin on Hegel as "the theorist of the unhappy consciousness, of the master–slave dialectic and of the struggle unto death for recognition, and the anthropologist of desire." (David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault: A Biography* [London/New York: Verso, 2019], p. 32). Jean Hippolyte was another French Hegelian, with whom Foucault was in direct contact; and then there was Georges Bataille, with whose work Foucault engaged in depth. Bataille followed Kojève's strong misreading of Hegel, which turned the master-slave dialectic from the *Phenomenology*

of Spirit into a metahistorical myth not too dissimilar from the role played by the primeval horde in Freud: history began when, as a result of a primordial fight, the vanquished begged for mercy and accepted life as a slave. However, whereas Kojève insisted that some kind of "universal and homogeneous state" would sublate the dialectic of masters and slaves and end history, Bataille folded the Hegelo-Kojèvian state sovereignty back into the sovereignty of masters, as opposed to serfs/slaves.

46 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* p. 95.

47 Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* p. 95.

48 Throughout, the concept of race retained what Éric Michaud had called its "extreme porosity," often ill-defined and mixed with nations such as nation and ethnicity. Éric Michaud, *Les Invasions barbares. Une généalogie de l'histoire de l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), p. 54.

49 I will return to this in the postscript.

50 Walter Scott, 1830 introduction to *Ivanhoe,* in *The Waverly Novels* IV (Edinburgh/London: Robert Cadell/Houlston & Stoneman, 1844), p. 377.

51 Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," p. 102.

52 Sylvia Wynter, "Ethno or Socio Poetics," in *Alcheringa* new series 2, no. 2 (special issue on Ethnopoetics), 1976, p. 88.

53 Wynter, "Ethno or Socio Poetics," p. 79.

54 Oliver Milman, "'Your heart races a bit': US weather man threatened with death for mentioning climate crisis," in *The Guardian*, July 16, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jul/16/chris-gloninger-tv-weather-man-climate-crisis; Jonas Grimm, "Speewald-Lehrkräfte wollen weg," in *die tageszeitung,* July 13, 2023, https://taz.de/Rechte-Drohung-in-Burg/!5943810/

55 Black Book Assembly, *More-Than-Half-A-Year Review* no. 4, n.d., p. 1

56 See also The Otolith Group's related publication, *World 3* (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall/Casco, 2015).

57 For an article that performs much-needed critical labour, see Quito Swan, "Blinded by Bandung? Illuminating West Papua, Senegal, and the Black Pacific," in *Radical History Review* no. 131 (May 2018), pp. 58–81.

58 Uroš Pajović and Naeem Mohaiemen, "Southward and Otherwise," in *ART-Margins* 8, no. 2 (2019), p. 89. While the promising exhibition *Spectres of Bandung*, which was being prepared by Zippora Elders, Philippe Pirotte and Vera Mey for the Gropius Bau in Berlin, was unforuntaly canceled, there have been curatorial and editorial projects that engage seriously (beyond nostalgia) with histories of non-alignment and tricontinentalism. Examples are the long-running traveling exhibition *Past Disquiet*, on « solidary museums/collections » from the 19060s to the 1980s, as well as *Ces voix qui*

*m'assièg*ent... at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris (2024), and Wing Chan and David Morris's volume *Precarious Solidarities: Artists for Democracy 1974-77* (London: Afterall, 2023).

59 See for instance David Dodwell, "Expanded Brics could be successor to the non–aligned movement," in South China Morning Post, August 26, 2023; Zeynep Çağla Erin, "The Legacy of the Non-Aligned Movement: The Rise of BRICS and the Multipolar Order," Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies, September 2, 2023, https://www.ankasam.org/the-legacy-of-the-non-aligned-movement-the-rise-of-brics-and-the-multipolar-order/?lang=en#_edn2

60 Christoph Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World: Decolonization and the Rise of the New Left in France, c. 1950–1976*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 270.

61 Kalter, *The Discovery of the Third World*, p. 269

62 See the reference to the Tricontinental in Raoul Vaneigem, "As au civilisés relativement à l'autogestion générlisée," *Internationale Situationniste* 12 (September 1969), pp. 75–76; translation by Ken Knabb: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/12.selfman.htm.

63 In 2020, Kambalu and Meessen had a joint exhibition at Mu.ZEE in Ostend, *History Without a Past.* For Meessen, see *the other country/l'autre pays* (Brussels: Wiels/Sternberg Press, 2018).

64 Guy Debord, "Conditions of the Congolese Revolutionary Movement," translated by Not Bored!, online http://www.notbored.org/congo.html; reproduced in Meessen, *the other country/l'autre pays*, p. 51.

65 Under the title "Contributions Serving to Rectify the Opinion of the Public Concerning the Revolution in Underdeveloped Countries," Khayati's text was a poster insert in Fundi's 1973 LP *None Shall Escape: Caribbean Situationist versus Trevor Menroe,* the sleeve of which also contains a version of Fundi's aforementioned map/timeline of Caribbean radical action.

66 Mustapha Khayati, "Contributions servant à rectifier l'opinion du public sur la révolution dans les pays sous-développés," in *Internationale Situationniste* 11 (October 1967), p. 41; English translation by Ken Knabb: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/11.thirdworld.htm.

67 Khayati, "Contributions servant à rectifier l'opinion du public sur la révolution dans les pays sous-développés," p. 42; English translation by Ken Knabb.

68 C.L.R. James, Grace Lee Boggs, and Pierre Chaulieu [Cornelius Castoriadis], *Facing Reality* (1958) (Detroit: Bewick, 1974), p. 89.

69 James, Boggs, Castoriadis, *Facing Reality*, p. 10.

70 Thomas Schmid, "Facing Reality: Organisation kaput," in *Autonomie* 1 (October 1975), pp.16–35.

71 The phrase in italics was used by Elizabeth Povinelli during her Gerbrands Lecture 4 March 2021. See https://www.materialculture.nl/en/events/gerbrands-lecture-elizabeth-povinelli.

72 Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 241–305; Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 6–7, 292–294, 298; Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning For Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 17–18. Here, Michael Denning's somewhat ambiguous account of a "novelist's international" also deserves a mention. Emerging before 1917, becoming allied with Moscow and the Comintern (Claude McKay, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright are part of Denning's narrative here), and taking off after the Bandung Conference, such an account of a multigenerational project allows for an analysis of continuities and transformations in the emancipatory imaginary. See Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 51–72.

73 Otto Huiswoud (Billings), "The Negro Question at the 4th World Conference," quoted in Minkah Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International: The African Blood Brotherhood, Asian Radicals, and Race, 1919-1922," in *The Journal of African American History* 96, No. 2 (Spring 2011), p. 172.

74 Huiswoud, quoted in Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International," p. 172.

75 Sen Katayama, "Negro Race as a Factor in the Coming World Social Revolution," 14 July 1923 (Comintern archives, 495:155:17), quoted in Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919–1929* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 313.

76 Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International," p. 172.

77 Theo Williams, *Making the Revolution Global: Black Radicalism and the British Socialist Movement before Decolonization* (London/New York: Verso, 2022), p. 56. See also Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 154–185.

78 Anton de Kom, *Wij slaven van Suriname* (Amsterdam: Contact, 1934).

79 Christian Kravagna, "Toward a Postcolonial Art History of Contact," in *Texte zur Kunst* 91 (September 2013), pp. 110–131.

80 On this project, see also Lucy Cotter (ed.), *Cinema Olanda: Wendelien van Oldenborgh* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz/Mondriaan Fund, 2017).

81 Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Books, 1983).

Theo Williams criticizes Robinson, as well as Anthony Bogues, for presenting an all too essentialist version of "Western Marxism" and then positing an incongruence between this Marxism and the Black radical tradition. See Williams, *Making the Revolution Global: Black Radicalism and the British Socialist Movement Before Decolonisation* (London/New York: Verso, 2022), pp. 9–12. Bogues's position strikes me as more dialectically nuanced than Robinson's, informed as it is by Caribbean thinkers such as Césaire and Wynter.

82 Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics,* trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), p. 74.

83 For a trenchant critique of the intellectual and political disaster that is Afropessimism, see Kevin Ochieng Okoth, "The Flatness of Blackness: Afro-Pessimism and the Erasure of Anti-Colonial Thought," in *Salvage*, January 16, 2020, https://salvage.zone/the-flatness-of-blackness-afro-pessimism-and-the-erasure-of-anti-colonial-thought/

84 Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire,* p. 25. Some, such as Mahmood Mamdani in *Neither Settler nor Native* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard university Press, 2020), stress the disastrous heritage bequeathed by European colonialism to the newly independent countries, which frequently ended up reproducing the politicization of ethnic boundaries and essentialization of cultural or religious difference. However, Getachew argues that while decolonization appeared to represent the triumph of the nation-state, the process challenged international hierarchies and forms of dependence so as to advocate and bring about forms of self-government beyond and against the "Westphalian" international order (pp. 30–36).

85 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), trans. Constance Farrington (London etc.: Penguin, 2001), p. 55.

86 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 27-28.

87 Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema," in *Tricontinental* no. 13 (October 1969), pp. 116, 118. Emphasis (in bold) removed from quotation.

88 See for instance Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham NC/London: Duke University Press, 2018).

89 Walter D. Mignolo, "Sylvia Wynter: What Does It Mean to be Human?," in Katherine McKittrick (ed.), *Sylvia Wynter: Being Human as Praxis* (Durham

NC/London: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 113. For a good critique, see David Myer Temin, "A Decolonial Wrong Turn: Walter Mignolo's Epistemic Politics,: in *Constellations* (2024), https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12744

90 Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poeiesis," in Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (eds.), *C.L.R. James's Caribbean* (Durham NC/London; Duke University Press, 1992), p. 77.

91 Sylvia Wynter, "In Quest of Matthew Bondsman: Some Cultural Notes on the Jamesian Journey," in *Urgent Tasks* no. 12 (Summer 1981), http://www.sojournertruth.net/matthewbondsman.html

92 Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception," pp. 63–91.

93 Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of Self-Cognition," in Jason R. Ambroise and Sabine Broecke (eds.), *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 226.

94 Wynter, "The Ceremony Found," p. 236.

95 However, the catalogue *Ceremony (Burial of an Undead World)* (Berlin/Leipzig: HKW/Spector Books, 2023) contains a number of strong contributions – and, when the dust has settled, this is ultimately one of those rare exhibition catalogues that matter, and will continue to be generative. In this respect, it is a fitting conclusion to Anselm Franke's tenure as head of exhibitions at the HKW.

96 This point was also emphasized by Anthony Bogues in a series of lectures at the History Department of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, December 2023.

97 Wynter, "The Ceremony Found," p. 235.

98 Wynter, "The Ceremony Found," p. 194.

99 James, Boggs, Castoriadis, *Facing Reality*, p. 131, quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism" (1979), in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, third edition (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2013), p. 132.

100 Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism," p. 147.

101 Collectif L'Insoumise (1977), quoted in Louise Toupin, *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972–1977*, trans. Käthe Roth (London/Vancouver: Pluto Press/UBC Press, 2018), p. 83.

102 As noted, one criticism leveled at second-wave feminism concerns its whiteness and refusal to engage with race and racism, with white privilege.

Writing about the French MLF, Françoise Vergès argues that the occlusion of colonialism by French feminists allowed them to position white French women as "the primary victims of oppression," and that "borrowing the vocabulary of the liberation movements would be a means of reproducing the erasure, forgetting and censorship of the struggles of enslaved and colonized women." (Françoise Vergès, "To Be a Woman, Not a Vision: Delphine Seyrig's Feminist Quest," in *Defiant Muses: Dephine Seyrig and the Feminist Video Collectives in France in the 1970s and 1980s* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2019), pp. 150–151.)

103 See the introduction by Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and Giovanna Zapperi in *Defiant Muses*, pp. 12–74.

104 Julianne Pierce, "Info Heavy Cyber Babe," in Cornelia Sollfrank and Old Boys Network (eds.), *First Cyberfeminist International*, reader (Hamburg: obn, 1998), p. 10, https://monoskop.org/images/7/77/First_Cyberfeminist_International_1998.pdf.

On the Old Boys Network, see https://monoskop.org/Old_Boys_Network, which links to historical documents as well as to recent texts by founding member Cornelia Sollfrank and others.

105 Guy Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti, "Theses on the Situationist International and Its Time," in Situationist International, *The Real Split in the International: Theses on the Situationist International and Its Time,* enlarged edition, trans. John McHale (London: Pluto Press, 2003), pp. 53, 71.

106 Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism," p. 219.

107 See Maria Hlavajova and Sven Lütticken (eds)., *Deserting from the Culture Wars* (Utrecht/Cambridge MA: BAK/MIT Press, 2020).

108 Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything* (London: Verso, 2020), pp. 181–210.

109 Erin Manning, "Creative Propositions for Thought in Motion," in *INFLeXions* no. 1 (May 2008), https://www.inflexions.org/n1_manninghtml.html

110 Gago, *Feminist International*, p. 3.

111 See Angela Saini, *The Patriarchs: The Origins of Inequality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2023), which comes with a back-cover blurb by Wengrow.

112 Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies* (London/New York: Verso, 2017), p. 143.

113 "Presenting: The Havana Declaration on the New International Economic Order," Progressive International, January 30, 2023, https://progressive.international/blueprint/d3b4f9e2-3fd7-4d9a-b067-d13b073b1c3f-presenting-the-havana-declaration-on-the-new-international-economic-order/en

114 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* [1845], Part 1, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm

115 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization,* trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), p. 47.

116 Kelly Oliver, *Earth and World: Philosophy After the Apollo Missions* (Columbia University Press, 2015); Bruno Latour, Facing Gaia: Eight Lecture son the New Climatic Regime, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge/Malden MA: Polity, 2017); Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, The Ends of the World, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (Cambridge/Malden MA: Polity, 2017). See also Sven Lütticken, "World History and Earth Art," in *e-flux journal* no. 49 (November 2013), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/49/59999/world-history-and-earth-art/

117 Malcolm Ferdinand, *Une écologie décoloniale. Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), inter alia pp. 133–148.

118 See also Peter Osborne's critique of Latour, "The Planet as Political Subject?" in *New Left Review* no. 145 (January-February 2024), pp. 1–14.

119 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge/Medford MA: Polity, 2018), p. 75.

120 Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I,* Part 3, chapter 7, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch07.htm

121 Hobbes already grappled with these issues, maintaining that inanimate things "cannot be authors," yet can be *personated* by "actors" under certain circumstances

122 Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London/New York: Verso, 2013), p. 17.

123 "Comrade of time" is one possible translation of the German "Zeitgenosse," contemporary. See Boris Groys, "Comrades of Time," in *e-flux journal* no. 11 (December 2009), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/11/61345/comrades-of-time/

124 Les Soulèvements de la terre, Premières secousses (Paris: La Fabrique, 2024), p. 224.

125 Musk allowed Robinson back on ex-Twitter when he bought the platform, and has repeatedly engaged with him there. See "Elon Musk engages with Tommy Robinson as social media warned over misinformation," in Independent, August 2, 2024, https://www.independent.co.uk/space/elon-musk-tommy-robinson-prime-minister-southport-spacex-b2590114.html; "The far right has moved online, where it is more dangerous than ever," in *The Guardian,* August 3, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/aug/03/the-far-right-has-moved-online-where-its-voice-is-more-dangerous-than-ever; "No 10 criticises Elon Musk for 'civil war is inevitable' post on England riots," in *The Guardian,* August 5, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/aug/05/no-10-criticises-elon-musk-post-x-riots

Postscript
Barbarian Evasions

Gaza has been reduced to rubble. The horrific Hamas attack of October 7, 2023 has provided the perfect occasion for a war that pushes the destruction of the fabric of Palestinian life into overdrive; Nakba 2.0. In the Spring of 2024, a vision of the Gaza Strip in 2035 drawn up by the office of Benjamin Netanyahu was leaked: these digital renderings of a Dubai-style free-trade zone with skyscrapers, high-speed train lines, highways and a booming port were bereft of any trace of Palestinian lives.[1] Moving from the register of tragedy to that of farce: in Germany, criticism of Israel has largely been silenced through a McCarthyite weaponization of "anti-antisemitism." Leftist newspapers like *die tageszeitung* join the right-wing Springer press in a relentless publicity blitz on the supposed scourge of leftist and decolonial antisemitism. Such charges are virtually impossible to counter, as essential critical concepts for the analysis of the situation, like that of settler colonialism, have themselves been branded antisemitic.[2]

With a push to force cultural institutions to adhere to the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism as an article of faith, many artists and intellectuals find themselves in an impossible position, between blackmail and blacklisting, as German bureaucrats and journalists keep *deutschsplaining* the world to them.[3] Not that the problem is limited to *Tschermany*: university campuses

across the US and Europe have become battlegrounds. For years, segments of the art world and the humanities have been busy decolonizing, at least on the level of discourse and in terms of diversity and representation. When actual neocolonial occupations and wars are foregrounded, things can get hairy.

What doesn't exactly help is that curatorial discourse is eagerly packaging Mignolo-style decolonization, with its "modernity/coloniality" trope, in ways that often amplify its intrinsic problems. In contrast to theories of contemporaneity as a condition marked by a "disjunctive synthesis of present times," here the contemporary is simply folded back into the modern, and modernism is equated with modernity.[4] The fact that modernity has of course been profoundly implicated in colonialism seems to take away the need to differentiate and engage with critical (alter)modernisms, just as it makes it superfluous to engage with contemporaneity as anything but the latest incarnation of a modernity that was always and exclusively about denying the coevalness (i.e. the contemporaneity) of the colonized, relegating them to the past in order to "civilize" or exterminate them.[5] Ironically, this desire to overcome modernity once and for all is itself covertly modernist, falling prey to a kind of tabula rasa syndrome.

Beyond the stratagems of art institutions, a more forceful and compelling obituary of modernity was written by Hakan Arslanbenzer precisely under the impact of "Gaza," calling it the "end of every possible modernity." Noting that, as a Turkish intellectual, he is in fact "that universalist, humanist, modern, democratic and autonomous intellectual who expresses ideas and acts freely with my own free will," Arslanbenzer addresses a reader who, "with [their] education, acquired manners and beliefs restructured in the modernity machine, form the other end of this connection. And we both wonder the same thing. How is it possible what's happening in Gaza?"[6] In what reads like a blog post in the problematic guise of an op-ed for the pro-AKP newspaper *Daily Sabah*, the author then asserts that "Modern history ended on Oct. 7," and goes on to present a kind of hybrid notion of the modern

that appears to have been filtered through notions of contemporaneity: "Modernity means not only being in the present moment but also being in multiple moments at the same time. From now on, those on earth will not be able to experience the same moment."[7] To be sure, the notion of contemporaneity as a disjunctive synthesis of different presents already allow doubt as to the degree to which this is a meaningful coexistence, a real sharing of spacetime; thus the divergence sensed by Arslanbenzer can be seen as exacerbating a tendency that was already immanent to the contemporary.

In a passage that I will return to, Aslanbenzer asks whether Adorno, "if he were alive today," would say that writing poetry after Gaza is barbarism.[8] To oppose civilization, Enlightenment or modernity with barbarism is a quintessential operation of modern ideology. It has been performed over and over again during the "War on Terror," and now in the wake of the Hamas attack. Benjamin Netanyahu has called "the civilized world to arms against the 'forces of barbarism" – with Hamas conveniently coming to stand in for Palestinians as such.[9] As aesthetical as it is political, the concept of barbarism is part of toolkit of the racial regime of aesthetics, yet this is one of those tools that can be – and have been – used to make some dents in the master's house. I'm not interested in defending "modernity" or even "modernism."[10] What I reject are undialectical abstract negations, and what I want to explore and demonstrate is the (potential) productivity of even problematic concepts, and signs of life among the ruins.

For much of its existence, the discipline of art history has been suffused with the trope of the barbarian invasions. Of fundamental importance here is a cascade of conceptualizations of Germanic tribes by both French and German historians and philosophers. Under the Ancien Régime, opponents of the French monarchy presented the people as heirs of the indigenous Gauls oppressed by a nobility descending from Frankish (i.e., Germanic) invaders, and "by 1789 the assimilation of Franks and ruling class was so common that, in his seminal pamphlet, Abbé Emmanuel Sieyès

called on the Third Estate, descended from the Gauls, to send the aristocrats packing back to their Germanic forests."[11] In his aforementioned account of the trope of race war as used by the conservative historians of the Ancien Régime, Foucault discerns in Boulainvilliers's characterization of the invading Franks the beginnings of "the famous great portrait of the 'barbarian' which we will go on finding until the late nineteenth century, and, of course, in Nietzsche."[12] Herder and the German romantics would add crucial formulations of *völkische* difference between Germany and France, pitting German *Kultur* against French civilization. By the late nineteenth century, it was a potent mix indeed, and interpretations of art in racial and *völkische* terms were hegemonic.

Éric Michaud's *The Barbarian Invasions* is a decolonial re-reading of art history from the late eighteenth into the twentieth century. From the use of the trope of the Frankish/Germanic invasions to characterize French art as being fundamentally Germanic in nature to sundry treatises othering and dehumanizing non-white races, and placing their art outside of art history properly speaking, Michaud sketches a genealogy of racialization through "barbarization," with the history of art emerging out of the dialectic of high or classic art and its barbarian other.[13] Michaud draws up an impressive catalogue of horrors, yet his magisterial study does too little justice to the dialectical twists and turns of the trope(s) of the barbarians and the barbarian invasions – to its ambiguous valences and contradictions, to its appropriations and détournements.[14]

Here, a counterpoint is offered by Maria Boletsi's insistence that "Although barbarism is traditionally viewed as the negative offshoot of "civilization," it can be recast as a creative and critical concept in cultural theory: it can unsettle binary oppositions, imbue authoritative discourses with foreign, erratic elements, and trigger alternative modes of knowing and relating to others."[15] One needs to be attentive to different self-identifications with the Barbarian, different ways of self-othering: in contrast to the reactionary and (proto-fascist) identification with the barbarian as a brute force unspoiled by artificial civilization, there

is the critical and questioning use of a Schiller: "If 'our age is enlightened' and 'the spirit of free inquiry has . . . undermined the foundations upon which fanaticism and deception had raised their throne,' Schiller famously asks, 'how is it, then, that we still remain barbarians?'"[16] The operation is structurally similar to that of Marx identifying fetishism with the capitalist subject, rather than with "benighted" Africans.

The Frankfurt School is the site of certain key counter-modern appropriations of the trope of barbarism. In "On the Concept of History" Walter Benjamin famously stated that every document of civilization or culture (*Kultur* in the original) is also a document of barbarism; on the other hand, in a fascinating passage in "Erfahrung und Armut" ("Experience and Poverty," 1933), he posited a "positive barbarism," as distinct from the reigning variety.[17] Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is also a dialectic of barbarism, with the irrational uses to which reason is being put steering society "toward Barbarism." Under fascism, the white male capitalist subject is sublated into the *Volkskörper*: "Race today is the self-assertion of the bourgeois individual, integrated into the barbaric collective."[18] In this diagnosis of a relapse into barbarism, the authors ultimately remain fairly orthodox in their use of the term as unquestioned opposite of civilization. In his 1951 essay "Cultural Criticism and Society," Adorno went further in implicating himself in the problem, leading to his famous dictum on poetry after Auschwitz:

> The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today.[19]

For Adorno, the only possible way forward was an exit from the „self-satisfied contemplation" of traditional *Kulturkritik*. This would require an understanding of critique as praxis, and of its conceptual labour as part of an immanent critique – here critique, rather than criticism, would indeed be a better translation of the German *Kritik* – of the dialectic of kultur and barbarism.[20] Arslanbenzer, who references the famous dictum but does little justice to the reflexive context, is quick to identify Adorno as "both a product and an agent of [the culture he critiqued], as well as one of the people who reproduced it. Just like Noam Chomsky unintentionally reproduces the American system."[21] In what is admittedly an impassioned blog post, rather than a theoretical essay, Arslanbenzer does evince a tendency to cast critical Jewish intellectuals in the role of moderns who are beyond redemption, while barbarism is "anti-culture, pre-civilization," and is "about reclaiming memory, breaking free from the cloud of lies surrounding the ancient, and emerging like the sun."[22]

However limited and problematic it may be, Arzlanbenzer's text is part of a "barbarian turn" in which the colonized and the othered increasingly claim the concept for purposes of self-identification. This new barbarian turn re-reverses the by now traditional-modern flip, which consisted of identifying the moderns as the real barbarians. Perhaps the polemical apogee of this tradition was Aimé Césaire's post-war indictment of the West:

> And now I ask: what else has bourgeois Europe done? It has undermined civilizations, destroyed countries, ruined nationalities, extirpated "the root of diversity." No more dikes, no more bulwarks. The hour of the barbarian is at hand. The modern barbarian. The American hour. Violence, excess, waste, mercantilism, bluff, conformism, stupidity, vulgarity, disorder.[23]

Going against such reversals, some contemporary theorists of colonialism and race insist that the colonized, the supposedly

unmodern, the indigenous, are indeed barbarians. It's all true: it was us all along! At its best, this turn takes the form of practices that use this trope from the modern toolbox to articulate divergences in non-identitarian terms, allowing for transversal coalitions and opening up the comrade-relation beyond the limited horizon of neo-modernist projects, such as Jodi Dean's.

In France, Houria Bouteldja and Louisa Yousfi have both released books that reclaim the notion of the barbarian in their very titles: Bouteldja's *Beaufs et barbares* and Yousfi's *Rester barbare*. Both activists/authors were formerly associated with the political movement and party Les Indigènes de la République, which claimed the status of indigeneity for the descendants of postcolonial immigrants – especially from the Maghreb. Laying claim to indigeneity and now also barbarism is a tactical speech act designed to shatter French universalism and constitute a new political subject.[24] Bouteldja conjures up an alliance of *beaufs*, which one could translate as "white trash," and the *barbares,* or "indigenous proles."[25] Yousfi engages more fully with the genealogy and valences of the concept, focusing on the barbarian as the Other of Empire, taking cues from the Algerian poet Kateb Yacine, who embraced the status of barbarian given to him by the colonial administration. "Beyond the empire lies the zone of non-being, where he and his fellow detainees vegetate: peasants, students, revolutionary comrades. Barbarians all."[26] Whereas once the slogan was *Socialisme ou Barbarie,* it might now be said to be Empire or Barbarism, with the second term having drastically changed its valence.

Bouteldja and Yousfi stress that "indigeneity" or "barbarism" do not amount to fixed, but rather political identities. While acknowledging that there is also a cultural and social side to such a barbarian identity, Bouteldja and Yousfi attempt to articulate a dialectic of the individual "Barbarian" and their milieu, countering the abstract French Enlightenment notion of the Individual/Citizen with a situated understanding of subjectivity. If, nonetheless, Bouteldja's characterizations of her and other identities and communities can at times appear essentialist and socially conservative,

the overall project articulated by her and Yousfi is still one of the most serious and cogent propositions for what one could term a politics of divergent identities, culminating in a call for coalitions between groups differentially affected by racial capitalism.

At one point in her earlier book *Les Blancs, les Juifs et nous,* Bouteldja quotes Israeli judge Moshe Landau – famous for having presided over the Eichmann trial – who is said to have said: "I detest Arabs, they remind me so much of Sephardic Jews."[27] This anecdote drives home the point that Israeli society has its internalized racial hierarchies even within the Jewish population, with Ashkenazi Zionists often viewing the influx of Sephardic Jews from the Levant during the 1950s and 1960s with disgust. This issue was critiqued by writer Jaqueline Kahanoff from the vantage point of what she termed Levantinism. Raised in Egypt before migrating to Israel, Kahanoff used her memories of the relatively self-sufficient minority groups under the Ottoman "millet" system, as adapted by Western colonizers, to critique the homogenizing drift of Zionist colonialism. As Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf put it in their recent examination of Kahanoff's Levantinism:

> She views Israel's resistance to "Levantinism" – and the resulting pressure on migrants to assimilate – not only as a disconcerting Israeli form of European colonialism, but as a form of a much older Orientalism. Since Kahanoff sees Levantinism failing in the context of both Arab and Jewish nationalism during the post-war period, she appropriates the term – beginning in the 1950s and increasingly after 1967 – so as to give it a positive sense. Taking the side of minorities at all times, she processes the trauma of forced homogenization after World War II. While a form of decolonialization that adopted a European nation state model led to de-Levantinization in North Africa and the Mediterranean region, forms of Levantine practice both there and in Europe could be renewed. This would oppose rampant

neonationalism and monocultural identity politics projects, focusing on other forms of coexistence.[28]

Kahanoff is an ambiguous figure. She stresses that "Levantine" Jews in countries like Egypt were eager to adapt modern learning and culture, and her fascination with the miniskirt being adopted by Muslim women suggests a residual tendency to think in terms of linear progress; on the other hand, she uses the concept of Levantinism to pluralize society and sketch a society in which people can *assemble* without *resembling* each other.[29] Politicizing Kahanoff further under contemporary conditions, we need to practice relations of comradeship and picture coalitions as Levantinist assemblages. At local, (anti)national and transnational levels, and ranging from concrete assemblies to far-flung networks, such Levantinist assemblages bring together hung-over moderns, critical barbarians, indigenous nomads and unsettled settlers – dissenting and deserting, on the frontier and in the heart of Empire.

A telling moment occurred on June 15, 2019 outside artist Kader Attia's decolonial space La Colonie in Paris (from which Yousfi used to present a web TV show). While the launch of an École décoloniale was taking place inside, a noisy parade of Gilets Jaunes came down the street. Much discussion about the politically inchoate and ambiguous nature of this "Yellow vests" protest movement has occurred in the circles of space La Colonie: was this a white right-wing movement a la the Tea Party or Trumpism, or was there a potential for progressive coalition building? On that day, it was more of a touristic encounter, as people from inside space La Colonie went out to take photos of the march, which included a large cut-out of Delacroix's *Liberty on the Barricades*. The groups were physically close without encountering each other; while the Gilets Jaunes refused to play the part of immigrant-hating white workers, an actualization of the potential coalition between *beaufs et barbares* imagined by Bouteldja did not exactly appear to be imminent.[30]

Nonetheless, even such missed encounters can be part of a project of sensitization, as sketched by Natascha Sadr Haghighian in her essay "What I Do Not Yet Recognize, Now at This Very Moment," in which the artist reflects on her own belated coming to terms with an anti-racist demonstration in 2006 triggered by the National Socialist Underground's killings in Germany. Failing to see the images of the protest and sense their importance, Sadr Haghighian acknowledges that she "participated in a process of rendering the images invisible."[31] The artist, who would later be part of the people's tribunal *NSU Komplex auflösen* and a member of the Society of Friends of Halit (which commissioned Forensic Architecture to reconstruct the NSU's murder of Halit Yozgat in Kassel), emphasizes the importance of "[abandoning] the anesthetized order

of the White Ignorance Contract" and of *sensitizing* oneself.[32] Such a barbarian sensitization also involves opposing hegemonic images – such as those produced and distributed by the little sovereigns of reactionary autonomy – with *counter-images* that seek to make "another reality imaginable and perceptible."[33]

On January 18, 2024, the official opening the Viennese art academy's open days (or *Rundgang*) took place in the academy's aula – a grand space with a ceiling painting by Anselm Feuerbach depicting the battle of the gods and the giants, where Zachary Formwalt had shown his *But Where Are the Hundred-Handed Ones?* a few years prior. At the opening, a group of students silently interrupted the proceedings and released a large number of balloons in the colours of the Palestinian flag, which nestled against the ceiling – in a Cagean distribution of monochrome dots. As a quasi-modernist gesture, the piece recalls Felix Gonzalez-Torres's polyptych *Forbidden Colors*, consisting of four monochrome panels in the colours of the Palestinian flag; at the time, the Israeli army did not allow these colours to be shown side by side in the occupied territories.

If Gonzalez-Torres called his piece "a solitary act of consciousness here in SoHo," the action there in Vienna was very much shared, even with those who wanted no part in it.[34] A mute speech act, this protest produced a counter-image which many, no doubt, immediately framed in terms of a barbarian attack on democracy and liberty. The contemporaneity of that moment was truly disjunctive, with people inhabiting the same physical space but vastly divergent intellectual, ethical, and political worlds.

Such experiences of disjunction proliferate, and on a larger scale, as far-right disruption faces off against the neoliberal status quo. Trump and Clinton/Biden/Harris, Le Pen and Macron, Brexiteers and Blairites: bound together by counter-imitation. While it obviously matters greatly whether a country is led by a fascist or not, in the end both tendencies enable the genocide in Gaza and contribute to the becoming-Gaza of the world. With established mainstream-progressive parties having long lost any propositional power, bereft of convincing narratives and compelling imaginaries, schismogenic desertions are more necessary than ever.

Endnotes

1 Adam Tooze, "Chartbook 284 Gaza: 'the decade after' - the surreal geoeconomic imaginary of Netanyahu's economic peace'," May 23, 2024, https://adamtooze.substack.com/p/chartbook-284-gaza-the-decade-after

2 In lieu of an exhaustive and exhausting press review, here's one article on an attack on Forensic Architecture in *die tageszeitung* (*taz*): Pitt von Webenburg, "Nahost-Konflikt und Krankenhaus-Beschuss – "Falls solche Bekenntnisse hier noch etwas wert sind," in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 20, 2024, https://www.fr.de/kultur/gesellschaft/nahost-konflikt-und-krankenhaus-beschuss-falls-solche-bekenntnisse-hier-noch-etwas-wert-sind-92900919.html

3 See, for instance, the petition protesting against Berlin's plan to introduce "compulsory commitment to the controversial IHRA definition of antisemitism as a prerequisite for cultural funding": https://openletter.earth/offener-brief-an-die-berliner-senatskulturverwaltung-und-an-joe-chialo-senator-fur-kultur-und-gesellschaftlichen-zusammenhalt-28487402?limit=0

4 In Holland, this is partly due to the influence of Rolando Vazquez's essay *Vistas of Modernity: Decolonial Aesthesis and the End of the Contemporary* (Amsterdam: Mondriaan Fonds, 2020). For a curatorial project, see *Tools for Demodernizing* by Kunstinstituut Melly (Rotterdam) and its institutional partners, https://tfd.kunstinstituutmelly.nl/

5 The notion of the "denial of coevalness" comes from Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983/2014). Peter Osborne places Fabian in a genealogy of conceptualizations of contemporaneity in "Existential Urgency: Contemporaneity, Biennials and Social Form," in *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* no. 49-50 (2015), pp. 182-183.

6 Hakan Arslanbenzer, "Gaza: End of Every Possible Modernity," in *Daily Sabah*, November 24, 2023, https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/gaza-end-of-every-possible-modernity

7 Arslanbenzer, "Gaza: End of Every Possible Modernity."

8 Arslanbenzer, "Gaza: End of Every Possible Modernity."

9 David Isaac, "Netanyahu Calls Civilized World to Arms Against 'Forces of Barbarism'," Jewish News Syndicate, October 30, 2023, https://www.jns.org/netanyahu-calls-civilized-world-to-arms-against-forces-of-barbarism/

10 See David Lloyd, *Under Representation: The Racial Regime of Aesthetics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

11 Eugen Weber, quoted in Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 118.

12 Michel Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 149.

13 Éric Michaud, *Les Invasions barbares. Une généalogie de l'histoire de l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015); in English as *The Barbarian Invasions: A Genealogy of the History of Art*, trans. Nicholas Huckle (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press, 2015).

14 Michaud's treatment of Alois Riegl is one case in point, which .I discuss in an extended version of this postscript, "Dialectic of Barbarism," in *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* no. 67 (2024), pp. 132-249.

15 Maria Boletsi, *Barbarism and Its Discontents* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. xi. One recent example of such a use of the barbarism trope is Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism,* trans. Andrew Goffey (Lüneburg: Open Humanities Press/Meson Press, 2015).

16 Boletsi, *Barbarism and Its Discontents*, p. 75, quoting from Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man.*

17 See Maria Boletsi's analysis in *Barbarism and Its Discontents;* on pp. 117–118, Boletsi insists on the importance of Benjamin's use of B*arbarentum* instead of *Barbarei* in this passage, though *Barbarentum* does not stand out for any German speaker; though less common than *Barbarei,* its analogy to terms like *Heidentum* and *Christentum* gives it an idiomatic ring.

18 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1944/47), trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 15, 138.

19 Adorno's essay "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft" is here quoted from the English translation by Samuel and Shierry Weber in Prims (Cambridge MA/London: MIT Press, 1981), p. 34 – even though the use of "criticism" is less than ideal.

20 See my discussion of this essay in the introduction.

21 Arslanbenzer, "Gaza: End of Every Possible Modernity."

22 Arslanbenzer, "Gaza: End of Every Possible Modernity."

23 Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism,* p. 76.

24 See the debate "Barbares et beaufs: l'entretien choc. Louisa Yousfi, Houria Bouteldja, Julien Théry," in *Le Media*, March 5, 2023, https://www.lemediatv.fr/emissions/2023/barbares-et-beaufs-lentretien-choc-louisa-yousfi-houria-bouteldja-julien-thery-1-a1dWe0TQScyKGU4dUgMw

25 Houria Bouteldja, *Beaufs et barbares. Le pari du nous* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2023).

26 Louisa Yousfi, *Rester barbare* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2022), p. 15. My translation.

27 See the translated excerpt published as "Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism, and the bitter fruits of Philo-Semitism," in *Verso Blog*, August 30, 2019, https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/4426-anti-semitism-anti-zionism-and-the-bitter-fruits-of-philo-semitism. I have not found a source for this anecdote; *se non è vero, è ben trovato.*

28 Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, "Kahanoff's Levantinism: The Anachronic Possibilities of a Concept," in *Propespections,* BAK online, February 3, 3023, https://www.bakonline.org/prospections/kahanoffs-levantinism-the-anachronic-possibilities-of-a-concept/

29 The reference here is to Nicole Lapierre's *Faut-il se ressembler pour s'assembler?* (Paris: Seuil, 2020).

30 Houria Bouteldja, *Beaufs et barbares* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2023).

31 Natascha Sadr Haghighian, *What I Do Not Yet Recognize, Now at This Very Moment* (Berlin: Harun Farocki Institut, 2023), p. 9.

32 Sadr Haghighian, *What I Do Not Yet Recognize,* p. 15.

33 Sadr Haghighian, *What I Do Not Yet Recognize*, p. 15.

34 I take the Gonzalez-Torres quotation from Greg Allen's blog post about his open-source version of the work, which anyone can purchase at cost or execute themselves; Allen bills his version as a "shared act of consciousness with people all over the world." https://greg.org/archive/2021/05/18/gonzalez-torres-forbidden-colors-may-2021.html#more-15695

As for the academy in Vienna: Its dismal track record when it comes to silencing Palestinian and anti-Zionist voices is documented by Rose-Anne Gush and Danny Hayward in "How Austrian Liberals Silenced Pro-Palestinians," in *Jacobin*, December 19, 2024, https://jacobin.com/2024/12/austria-liberals-pro-palestine-antisemitism